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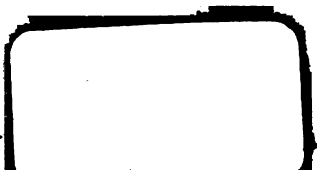
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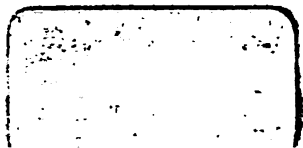
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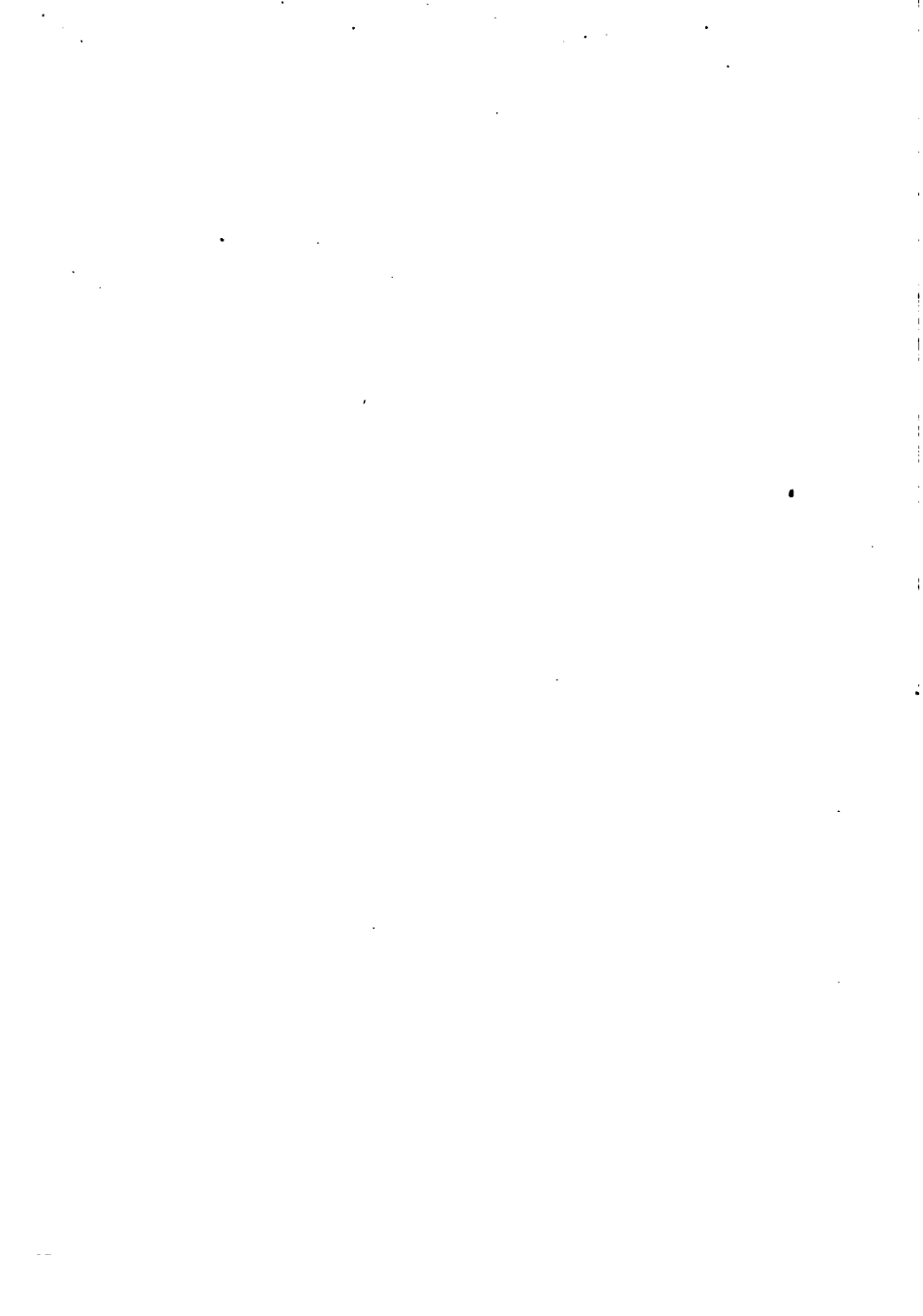
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In Fair Granada



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In Fair Granada

A Tale of Moors and Christians

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By

D. C.

E. EVERETT-GREEN

Author of "After Worcester," "The Heir of Hascombe Hall,"
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IN FAIR GRANADA.

CHAPTER I.

DRAWING NEAR.

THE great rock of Gibraltar—Gibralfero, the “Hill of the Beacon,” as it was then called for the most part—stood up lion-like from the blue sea. The sun was shining with transparent brilliancy upon the waters of the great harbour, upon the white walls and domes of what remained of the old Moorish town of Algeciras, and upon the town of Gibralfero itself, with its castle and churches and convents, most of them of Moorish construction, although now consecrated to Christian uses, and resounding with the sound of chant and psalm.

The little vessel which had sailed a month before from the shores of England lay like a white bird upon the blue water, her sails furled, her anchor dropped, waiting till her boats could bring off from shore a supply of fresh water and other requisites. For she had had a rather stormy passage through the Bay of Biscay and down the coast of

Portugal, which had delayed her considerably on her way; and although so near to her destination of Malaga, she must needs lay in certain supplies here, lest she should be becalmed in the smooth blue waters of the Mediterranean, and crew and passengers alike suffer.

Scarcely had the anchor dropped in the harbour before a lady appeared upon the deck of the little vessel. The captain, as he saw her appear, gave her kindly greeting.

"Troubles all over now, I take it, mistress. We have had a sore tossing, but beshrew me if you have not stood it like the toughest old tar afloat! If it had not been for the poor young gentleman below, I trow you would have been on deck with the rest of us ever since we left port! How is he now, lady? And is there aught he is wanting? Can't you get him up on deck in this beautiful sunshine? We shall be lying here till to-morrow, and there's no more motion than the rocking of a cradle."

"Indeed, that is what I want to do," answered the girl with eagerness, a vivid smile illumining her face as she looked round about her. "Nay, but how beautiful it all is! What are those dazzling white buildings that I see? Ah! look at that great rock with its lion's face. I have heard men speak of that before. But I had pictured these straits as something so narrow! Methought a vessel could but just win its way through. Yet here all lies so wide open—so free! Which is the shore of Africa, and which that of Spain? And what are these red-sailed boats I see flitting to and fro? Art sure that we are safe from the Barbary pirates, of whom we do hear such terrible things?"

Do they not lie waiting in the little bays and inlets of their shores, and suddenly pounce upon some hapless vessel lying at anchor, or sailing peacefully towards her haven, and fall upon her unawares to her own undoing?"

The skipper smiled rather grimly as he cast his eyes towards those grinning guns of his shining brightly in the sunshine. Those were days when no wary sailor put to sea without carrying the means of self-defence against foreign foe or lawless pirate. Sailors could handle pistol and cutlass as easily and skilfully as they could handle rope or spar. And few captains afloat but had known what it was to have a brush with some armed assailant, in which it was the boast of British mariners that they generally came off best.

"Indeed, you are right, fair mistress. Many a trim vessel has had to fight for her life and freedom in these waters. Those rogues of Turks are thieves to their fingertips, but they have a wholesome fear of honest English sailors. They've never given me aught but a wide berth. Sometimes I wish they had. I've always got my welcome ready for any as comes athwart my bows or hangs on in the rear. Don't you be afeard of any of them coming anigh the *Bonnie Bess*. She's as full of spirit as the queen she was named after, and as ready for a tussle, too! Afraid of a Barbary pirate or a Spanish cruiser! That's not the fashion with English sailors, my ladybird."

Yolante smiled. She was fond of this rough but tender old skipper, who had been so kind and thoughtful for her and her sick brother all through the voyage. Not only

had he from the first arranged for them a really roomy and almost luxurious pair of cabins in the best part of the vessel, but he had taken on board certain stores with a view to the comfort of the invalid, and although he had been well paid for his outlay in such matters, yet he had given that which no money could buy—a real personal tenderness and skill to the patient, and a fatherly, protecting care for the fair young sister, who had accompanied her brother to his temporary exile in a foreign land.

He stood beside her now, answering her questions, pointing out all the features of the wonderful stretch of land and water which lay like a panorama before them, and explaining somewhat to her of the relations betwixt Moors and Christians, which had long been the problem of this southern portion of Spain, and seemed like to reach its final climax in the near future.

“If King Philip had but the sense of his father, the Emperor Charles, all might yet be well and peaceful,” spoke the old skipper grimly. “It’s the Moors that have made this country what it is. You will see when you reach Malaga and Granada what they have done and can do. Wherever they go they make the wilderness to blossom like the rose, as the saying is; and they are ready enough to live at peace, if the Christians will only let them. They have been conquered, and they know it. They don’t ask to govern; they only ask to live at peace in their own fashion. Ferdinand and Isabella conquered them, but were content with that, and, after driving away those who would not submit to Spanish rule, were kind

enough to such as chose to stay and submit themselves to the yoke. Their successor Charles, I have heard men say, made harsh edicts against the Moors, but had the sense not to have them enforced; and so things have gone on peacefully enough. But his son is a man of different character. We sailors begin to know somewhat of that. I tell you, mistress, I believe that one day England will have a score to settle with that crafty spider sitting in his web in the Escorial, and weaving his cruel plots and plans. He has his eyes now upon the Netherlands: God help the people there! He has his eyes upon the Moors, his most prosperous and industrious subjects. God help them too, say I, though they be infidels and Mussulmans! He has his eye—so men say—upon his own Spanish subjects who dare to read the Holy Book, and prefer to worship the Lord without bowing the knee to saints and Virgin. The Lord have mercy upon them too! They've got that devil's tool, the Inquisition, planted on these shores. That is the only thing I dislike for you and your brother in leaving you on Spanish soil. Take you care, my ladybird, that you walk warily in this spider's web, for the Lord only knows where its meshes extend to!"

The hardy old sailor spoke with considerable eloquence and feeling, like one who had thought and heard much, as indeed he had. Yolante smiled at the anxious glances turned upon her. She came of a family with an admixture of Spanish and Italian blood in its veins, although for above a generation it had been wholly English. Her grandmother had been a waiting-woman to the hapless

Catherine of Aragon, and many generations before that their ancestors had come from Italy, and their very name, Montara, seemed to bespeak a foreign lineage. Yet Yolante always thought and spoke of herself as English, although she spoke both the Spanish and Italian languages with ease and fluency, from the fact that they had servants of both nationalities in their large baronial household, though some of these had been born and brought up in England, and had never seen their parents' birthplace.

Lady Montara, the mother of Eudo and Yolante, had come to England in the train of Philip the Second, when he came to woo and wed the English queen. She was half Spanish and half English, and had easily been persuaded to listen to the addresses of Lord Montara, a fascinating and wealthy young noble of the court, who lost his heart at once to the daughter of the famous house of Aguilar. She was, in fact, descended from that very Don Alonso de Aguilar who lost his life in fighting the Moors, and whose fame is sung in so many ballads and odes. And though she herself had never visited her native land again, she kept up a constant and affectionate correspondence with her brother, Don Rodrigo Hernandez de Aguilar, who was a notable personage in Granada; and it was to his care that she was now entrusting her son and daughter, when the health of the former, after a wound received by accident in a tourney held before Queen Elizabeth and her court, became so frail that the leeches and the queen's own physician declared that a winter in England would mean death, and that he must be sent to

some southern latitude for the space of a year or two, until he should have regained his lost health and vigour.

Thus it was that Yolante felt no fear of the life lying before her, even beneath the tyrant sway of King Philip of Spain, for whom she felt little reverence or love. Her relatives would protect her (or so at least she thought and believed); and she had been reared in reverence for the old forms of faith, though her father's household conformed willingly to the laws for uniformity of worship which prevailed in England.

The Montaras, in fact, belonged to that numerous class which appreciated the greater light and liberty of the Reformation without altogether casting aside the traditions and beliefs of former generations. With a breadth of view found only in a minority in those days (and by no means lacking in the queen herself, had she spoken all her mind on the subject), they were able to regard the Catholic Church as one, embracing all those who were baptized into the Christian faith, whether they gave allegiance to the Vatican and its mass of dogma, or whether they held to the Bible as the only source of truth and light. The reverence and worship of the one class attracted them equally with the boldness and independence and clear-sightedness of the other. Yolante had been brought up in a healthy atmosphere of true piety and liberality of thought. She hated no man for his beliefs; she liked to think that all Christian men were brothers, and that all the human family were in a less close and particular sense the children of God. Hard questions had not

troubled her head; they had never been forced upon her; and she was now going fearlessly forth into a land where a different form of Christian worship prevailed from that to which she had been used. Yet she felt no repugnance to joining in it—no fear that she would be branded with the terrible name of “heretic.” Her mother, in giving her certain instructions as to how she should conduct herself in her uncle’s household, had added,—

“You have only to be discreet, my daughter, and you will be safe from peril. My brother has written that the trouble is not betwixt the Church and Christian heretics, but betwixt Christians and Moors. You may, in truth, see something of that trouble and warfare; but in his palace in Granada you will be safe from all alarm, and Eudo will receive the care of a son of the house. Had the country been more settled, I would more willingly have had him remain in Malaga, where the snow and frost never come. But since your uncle is in Granada, you must needs go thither; and albeit there will be doubtless some cold to encounter, yet the air is so pure, and the sun shines so hot and health-giving, that I trow he will do well, even though the snow may lie upon the ground at certain seasons.”

So the girl was going forth to be her brother’s companion and nurse, since his mother could not accompany him thither. And now they had reached the sunny shores of Spain, and although chill October had come, and in England the woods would be turning crimson and gold, and fires beginning to roar up the chimneys, here all was bathed in hot, bright sunshine; and as Eudo came

slowly up the companion way and out upon the deck, his eyes lighted with wonder at the beauty and glory of the fairy scene.

Yolante stood beside him, gazing from his white, transparent face to the beauties upon which his eyes were resting. Eudo had the look of one who has been near to the gates of death and is slowly returning thence. The wound to his lung might well have proved fatal, save for the devoted nursing of his mother and sister. It was three months since the mischance had happened to him, and he was still weak and feeble, and during the voyage through the blustering waves of the Atlantic and the heavy gales had had perforce to keep to his bed, and only get the air from the open porthole when it was soft and mild enough for him to breathe it without fear. He therefore looked more white and frail than when he had come on board; but after having been on deck in the sunshine for a while, a faint colour came into his cheeks, and his eyes seemed to reflect the deep blue of the water of the harbour.

There was a strong likeness between this brother and sister, so near in age, so closely bound together by ties of kinship and love. Eudo was twenty, and Yolante one year younger; but she looked the elder of the pair, for there was much force of character in her face, whilst his was dreamy, and almost too ethereal to give the idea of strength, despite the firm lines of the mouth which told a tale of endurance and self-control.

In features they were much alike—the same broad brow, high-bred lineaments, distinguished carriage, and graceful

bearing. Eudo's locks were of burnished gold, and his eyes were blue as the waves of the Mediterranean, so that he looked almost like a painted saint on a church window. Yolante's locks, though not without their tints of burnished gold, were darker in hue, and only shone golden in the light of strong sunshine; at other times they were a warm chestnut brown, standing off from her face with a crisp wave, and generally twisted about her head in a natural coronet. Her eyes were dark as night, and could sparkle with mirth, anger, or excitement, or melt into wonderfully tender softness, according to her mood. Her brows were black and beautifully arched, and although she was singularly free from vanity, she had already received tributes of warm admiration from courtiers and gentlemen, and more than one gallant had already come forward as suitor for her hand.

But Yolante was so far absolutely heart-whole. Her devotion had always been given to Eudo, and he was still the first in her thoughts and her heart. Also there was that in her nature which longed to see something of the world. Had she been born a boy, nothing would have held her back from travel and adventure. She longed after the mystic lands of the West, of which the mariners were telling such strange things. On board this little sloop she had spent many a long hour beside the wheel, hearing the men tell of the magical things they had seen, the adventures they had met, the fairy-like glories of those western isles which lay beyond the Spanish Main. Right glad was she that it was her lot now to see somewhat for

herself of other lands than her own. Grieved as she was for the cause of this journey into Spain, it was a joy and delight to her to think that at last she should witness some of those wonders of land and sea of which she had dreamed these many years, without daring to hope that she would ever see with her own eyes any of those wondrous beauties.

They were near enough to the Old Mole of Gibraltar to note something of the life of the harbour. Boats kept flitting to and fro, bearing strange turbaned men in flowing robes, or negroes scarcely clad at all. Arabs, Turks, and Moors—she scarce knew one from the other—seemed to throng upon the landing stage, chaffering and gesticulating. Boys and men swam about in the water like fishes, and whenever any persons in Spanish dress appeared at the Mole, they seemed to be mobbed with offers by the boatmen, by beggars, and by the vendors of fruit and other merchandise.

All this Yolante's strong young eyes took eager cognizance of, as she sat beside Eudo and strove to point out to his weakened vision the things that were so plain to hers. It was of immense interest to both. He felt like a man released from prison, she like a bird escaped from a gilded cage. The intoxication of the clear air and southern sunshine seemed to get into her blood. The glamour of the east, inasmuch as it could be seen in the west, got its grip upon her senses.

"It is like unto some enchanter's tale, Eudo!" she cried. "I can scarce believe that I do not dream it all. Yet I see men with turbaned heads; I see brilliant, flowing gar-

ments, and the black, shining skins of the men of the desert. And look yonder! There goes forth a boat from the Mole. It is rowed by dusky men, with little clothing upon their lithe limbs. Within are two or three Spanish nobles. I can see that their cloaks are of velvet, and there is a gleam of gold and jewels too. And one with them wears turban and robes—robes of silk, if I mistake me not; for the sun glistens upon them bravely. Oh, let us come to the vessel's side and see them pass by! methinks they are coming this way. I would fain obtain a nearer view. If thou art weary, I will go alone."

But Eudo was eager too, despite his weakness, and he rose and went forward with his sister, and stood leaning over the side with her.

The boat might have been making straight for the *Bonnie Bess* from the course it was taking, and very soon all the figures in it were quite distinct. There was an elderly man, dressed in the flowing silken robe (now proscribed) of the wealthy Moor, a richly-adorned turban upon his head, from which abundant gray locks escaped. He had a very watchful and acute face that looked somewhat Jewish in cast, and he was speaking with the three caballeros beside him with some gesticulation and earnestness.

These gallants were very sumptuously dressed, after the fashion of the times. Two of them looked, as indeed they were, men of great stature and strength. Yolante wondered what their nationality might be, for they scarcely looked like Spaniards, she thought, though clad as such;

and yet they hardly (or so she thought) wore the aspect of Moors. Their attire was of silk and velvet of many brilliant hues, their rapiers were jewelled at the hilt, and the plumes of their hats fastened by jewelled clasps. The third of these caballeros seemed to be younger than the taller pair, and was less richly habited—that is to say, his velvet suit was of black, slashed here and there with white cut cloth, and the only jewel he wore was a diamond clasp to his short cloak. Yet to Yolante's eyes he looked the most finished gentleman of the three, and there was something attractive to her in the olive-tinted face, the bright dark eyes, and the vivid boyish smile which lighted the face from time to time. He appeared at the first to be listening with attention to the words of the old man who was discoursing to them; but as the boatmen approached nearer, his glance strayed towards the *Bonnie Bess*, and became suddenly riveted upon her with a gaze of evident interest. A few moments later and his eyes had discovered the two figures leaning over the bulwarks, and, to Yolante's surprise, his plumed hat was instantly doffed, and not only doffed, but waved towards her in distinct and unmistakable greeting.

“Who can it be, Eudo?”

“Nay, I know not. I had not thought to see any friendly face before we touched at Malaga. Our uncle has promised to have us met there, but I had not thought to find friends ere that.”

The skipper was already on the alert. He saw that these fine caballeros were making for his vessel. He

noticed also that one of his own seamen was in the boat signalling to him, and he guessed that some at least of the party desired to come on board and obtain a passage with him to Malaga.

The land journey through the mountainous roads was arduous and often perilous, and a passage by water was much more to be desired. But that any of these caballeros should claim friendship with his passengers was a thing he had been no more prepared for than they were themselves.

All doubt, however, was speedily dispelled as the boat reached the vessel's side, and the young man in the black suit sprang aboard with agility, and made his way to the side of Yolante and Eudo, hat in hand, and with that air of courtesy and polished deference that sat so gracefully upon the Spaniards of his age.

"I cannot be mistaken. It is the gracious Señorita Yolante of the noble house of Montara, and Señor Don Eudo, her brother, whom we of the household of Hernandez de Aguilar are expecting with such pleasure and eagerness."

He spoke Spanish, the clear Castilian Spanish of the nobles, which never even in the south degenerated into the softer and thicker intonation of Andalusia. Yolante's eyes lighted. She returned his bow with a graceful reverence learned at court, and then extended her hand, which he took with an air of reverence and homage, and, dropping quickly and lightly upon one knee, pressed for a moment to his lips.

"You are welcome indeed, señor," spoke Yolante, whose

words came even more easily than those of Eudo. "I had not thought to see one of the noble house of Don Hernandez de Aguilar until we arrived at our destination in sunny Malaga. I thank you in my mother's name, as well as in mine own, for this great courtesy and kindness on your part."

"And you must tell us who you are, señor," spoke Eudo, as he gave his hand in friendly English fashion, "for we do not know that; though you are welcome as a kinsman, and doubtless we shall be acquainted with the name when you tell it us."

"In sooth I am a near kinsman; your cousin, the eldest son of the house of Aguilar—at least of that branch to which the señora your mother belongs."

"Then you are Don Antonio!" spoke Yolante eagerly, scanning with added interest the handsome features of the young Spaniard. "Our mother has told us the names of our kinsmen. You have a sister, Juanita, all your own. And your father, Don Rodrigo, has married a second time—a lady of English family, though bred up in the court of Madrid; and there are two little children at your home, whom she, of course, hath never seen. But she remembers you, Don Antonio, albeit you were but a child when she saw you last."

"Verily that is true; and I scarce remember her face, or the English land whither I went in my childhood with my father. But it doth please me, señorita, to think that I have visited the land of which we hear so much in these days, and that I can speak in some sort your native tongue,

albeit not with that grace and fluency with which you speak mine. In our house we love all that is English, and my lady mother awaits with impatience the moment when she will clasp in her arms those who come from the land of her birth, which she has never forgotten."

Yolante's eyes brightened as Antonio spoke in this fashion, at once so courteous and so cordial. She had been afraid that the high-born Spanish relatives of whom she had heard would be cold and distant in manner, even if kindly in their dealings. This expectation on her part had not daunted her as regards herself, but she had feared that Eudo might be chilled and discomfited by it, and suffer from that homesickness which might retard his progress towards recovery.

But so gentle and kindly and friendly was the manner of their new relation that Eudo's reserve and shyness melted before it like hoar-frost in the sunshine, and before they had half done asking and answering questions, they felt as though they had known Antonio quite an appreciable time.

He told them that he and his friends had been travelling through the districts of the Alpuxarras and the mountains of Ronda upon a mission of inquiry and discovery, of which he would speak more fully later. They had resolved to return to Malaga by water, and Antonio had hoped that by good fortune he might perhaps fall in with the vessel that was conveying his relatives thither.

"I was assured, when I reached Gibralfero a week since, that no such sloop as the *Bonnie Bess* had passed through

the straits; and as the weather has been inclement and stormy, I could believe that her voyage had been something tedious. And now I am rewarded for my patient waiting, in that I am the first to claim kinship with my fair cousins, and shall have the happiness of presenting them in person to my father when we land at the fair harbour of Malaga."

"And who are those two fine caballeros who accompanied you hither, Don Antonio?" asked Yolante presently, noting that they still remained on board, keeping, however, away from their recent companion, and conversing for the most part with the gray-bearded man in the turban and flowing robes. "And that venerable man in the dress of a Moor? I am not mistaken in thinking him a Moor? But methought as you crossed the water you were speaking with him and the Spanish caballeros as though you were one party."

"We have been travelling together on the same errand," answered Antonio, a look of gravity crossing his face. "To-day I will not trouble you, fair cousin, with the anxious thoughts which weigh upon the hearts of those to whom this fair land of Southern Spain is dear. But I will tell of my companions. Yonder old man is a citizen of Granada, a man of Jewish and Moorish blood. His family have been brought up in conformity with the laws, and are Christian in name and by profession; and he himself attends the service of the Mass, and is in all respects an upholder of the laws, albeit he has hitherto retained his national dress, and paid no small sum year by year for the right to do so. Ibrahim Ben Abner is known and

respected throughout Granada, and is trusted by the captain-general, the Marquess of Mondejar, as one who sincerely desires peace and prosperity to the realm. With your permission, Doña Yolante, I will present him to you later, since we shall be journeying now together up to fair Granada itself."

The girl's eyes brightened as she looked towards the picturesque figure and earnest, strenuous face.

"I should be honoured in knowing such a man," she replied. "And are these caballeros with him his sons?"

"Nay, they are not near in blood to him, though belike there may be some distant tie of kinship. These twain are, however, notable youths in the city—Spanish Moors we call them. There are many such now in these regions. The blood of both nations is in their veins. They dress like Spaniards, they conform in all outward matters to the laws laid down by the king and Cortes; yet they do not forget their Moorish descent, and at heart many such are more Morisco (as we call it) than Spaniard. They have double names, and are known by both, and use either at will."

"How so?" asked Yolante eagerly. "How can they have two?"

"Men say it is thus," spoke Antonio, in a low voice: "As children they are brought to the font to be baptized by the priest; but later on, at home, they receive a different name, and a different rite is performed to make them as one of their brethren Moslems. We Spaniards know yonder caballeros as Don Miguel and Don Manuel de Solis.

But there are others in the city who only speak of them as Hassan and Murad Yahye. They come of the race descended from the famous Cidi Yahye, and methinks in their hearts they are prouder of that than of aught else in the world beside."

Yolante's eyes grew wide with wonder as she gazed at the stalwart, towering figures of the two young men. She felt as though she were suddenly landed in the midst of some strange, mystical legend of bygone days. The old life of the past seemed to be slipping away from her. What would the new page be like which was now turned before her wondering gaze?

CHAPTER II.

THE CITY OF THE POMEGRANATE.

THOSE days of travel were like one long, beautiful dream to Yolante. Waking one morning to the cries of the sailors as they cast anchor in the blue harbour of Malaga, she came on deck to see, as it were, a fairy world before and around her. The blue Mediterranean lay dreaming in a soft haze of opalesque tints, with snow-white gulls dipping their wings and flying hither and thither with strange, harsh cries—the white walls and domes of the city, glistening in the level beams, contrasting with the glossy and luxuriant foliage of orange and citron, olive and palm, and with the brilliant and dazzling hues of the flowers which draped and clothed them. Beyond were the terraced hills which the industry of the Moors had turned into gardens, vineyards, and olive groves, and which still retained some semblance of their former luxuriance and verdure, although little by little the exodus of the Moors from the land was telling sadly upon its aspect. Beyond that again, dim in the blue distance, towered the great Sierra Nevada, which, as the travellers journeyed onwards, became more and more visible in its rugged grandeur and solemn might.

At Malaga there was in waiting for the travellers such an escort as fairly astonished and dazzled the eyes of the girl, although in her father's house in England she had been used to a goodly following when any of them went upon a journey.

But there was something almost barbaric in the splendid trappings of the horses, in the sumptuous livery of the crowds of olive-faced servants, in the gaudy robes of the few negro boys who accompanied the *cortége*, and the richness of the service which was offered to the strangers from a strange land.

Don Rodrigo himself had not been able to come to meet his relatives as he had hoped. He sent a sealed letter to explain his absence, but he hoped that his son Antonio would take his place, and conduct them safely through the mountainous regions to the fair city of Granada, where a welcome would be awaiting them which should make them for the time forget all that they had left behind.

And the travellers were content indeed with their escort. By this time they not only felt quite at home with Antonio, but they had established friendly terms also with the two brothers, Don Miguel and Don Manuel, and with the grave-faced Moor, Ibrahim Ben Abner; and already they had begun to learn somewhat of the strange and sorrowful conditions that now threatened the fair lands through which they rode.

Don Miguel and Don Manuel possessed in no small measure the eloquence and poetic fervour of the Moorish race. Their hearts were full to overflowing of the lore

of their forefathers. Spaniards though they might style themselves—and not without a measure of truth, since they had much Spanish blood in their veins—it was of their Moorish parentage and descent that they were far more truly proud.

They told to the sister and brother the tales of the past : how that the Moors had overrun and conquered well-nigh all the land of Spain, and ruled it so wisely and well that it was like a paradise of plenty ; but that how, little by little, they had been driven back by Christian kings and warriors, until in the days of Ferdinand and Isabella there had been a crusade against them, and bit by bit, city by city, all had been lost. They told the tale of Zahara, captured by the Moors ; of Alhama, so gallantly stormed by the Christians in revenge. They told of the siege of Malaga, of Baza, and finally of Granada itself, under the ill-fated Boabdil “ the Unlucky.” Again and again, as they rode through the narrow gorges, the wild song would break forth from one or other of the brothers, or from their train of followers, most of whom were Moriscos ; and the words of the lament became familiar to the girl, and sometimes almost brought tears to her eyes,—

“ *Pasvase el rey Moro,
Por la ciudad de Granada,
Desde las puertas de Elvira,
Hasta las de Bivarambla,
Ay de mi, Alhama !*”

For in losing Alhama the Moors knew that they had lost the key of Granada, and that it was only a question of

time how soon their last beautiful citadel must fall into the hands of the conquerors. And yet, although well-nigh a century had passed since these events of which the brothers spoke and sang had happened, the Moriscos and Christians were living peacefully together, and the climax of the tragedy had not come.

It was Antonio who, when the brothers De Solis had ridden ahead, as they often did, their fiery Arabs carrying them swiftly over the rough ground of the mountain passes, told the story of the past century, and of the fears that now filled the minds of men.

The Catholic sovereigns, Ferdinand and Isabella, whilst waging war with the infidel, resolved to be the rulers over all the land of Spain, were yet desirous of retaining in their kingdom those subjects whose industry and skill were of such value. But they put their religion in the foremost place, and such of the Moors as could not live peaceably under Christian rule were forthwith banished the realm. Those, however, who would conform to the laws, and live peaceably amongst a Christian population, were suffered to remain; and great were the efforts of the sovereigns and their army of priests and bishops to convert to Christianity the Moriscos dwelling in their midst. The good Archbishop Talavera had done great things towards this end by his gentle methods, his patience and forbearance. But there were others, notably the wily and resolute Ximenes, who used very different methods; and though such men as these, through bribes or by intimidation, often seemed to work great marvels—could boast that they had baptized three

thousand converts in a day, and had been forced to substitute a general "aspersion" of holy water for the separate baptism of each individual—yet such methods gained no real hold upon the hearts of the people. Though they conformed outwardly, and brought up their children to conform to Christian rites, yet in secret they practised their own form of worship, and hated with a bitter and undying hatred the nation which ruled over them.

Still there had been peace in the land and kingdom of Granada. The Moriscos were by far the most numerous in the villages and cities of the Alpuxarras; but each place had its chapel and its curate or priest, and so long as these lived quietly, ministering to such as came to them, celebrating the Mass and other offices of the church, and carrying on such business as belonged to them, no ill-feeling arose between the two rival camps. Each was used to the presence of the other. There was a good deal of intermarriage in some places, and in others the condition of affairs was accepted as a matter of course. The Moriscos were supposed by law to attend Christian worship, to confess, to wear Spanish dress, and to permit their women to go abroad with uncovered faces; but for many long years after these edicts had been proclaimed they were never enforced—a system of fines being substituted, which the Moriscos gladly paid, and continued living their own life much as before, save that for the most part they conformed to the attendance at Mass on Sunday, and brought up their children for baptism by the priest, whatever other rite they might perform in the privacy of their own homes.

Even the Inquisition had been content hitherto with enriching its coffers by this influx of fines, rather than by enforcing all its diabolic practices against the infidels. Whatever might be done in Seville and Cordova, and other places farther away from the country where the Moriscos still dwelt in great numbers, here, in and around Granada, it had been deemed advisable to exercise patience and discretion. Throughout the reign of the Emperor Charles the edicts, though existing, were never enforced. But Philip now sat on his father's throne. He had turned his attention of late to the condition of his Moorish subjects. He had heard with displeasure that they still lived their own lives, that their conformity to Christianity was but nominal, that money was suffered to do the work of true conversion; and his soul was stirred within him. He gave out that the edicts of his father were to be strictly enforced; and in spite of the remonstrances of his advisers, and even of the priests themselves, he insisted that no jot or tittle of the proclamation should be evaded, not even that monstrous clause which demanded that all the baths with which the Moorish houses were furnished should be pulled down.

A year had been allowed for the edict to take effect, and that year was fast expiring. Upon the first of January following, all Moriscos were to lay aside their silken and woollen robes and appear in European dress. There was to be no shuffling as to religion; they were to become orthodox Catholics without reservation, to abandon their own language and speak only Spanish, to give up their

domestic habits for those of their conquerors, and to send forth their women unveiled into the streets like those of Frankish nations.

"It cannot and will not be done without bloodshed," spoke Antonio, very gravely. "My father was one of the nobles of Granada who accompanied the Marquess of Mondejar to Madrid to seek to alter the king's purpose in this, but to no avail. He has said the word, and he will adhere to it. But I fear me the City of the Pomegranate will see evil things and hear terrible tales ere this matter be settled."

"The City of the Pomegranate! what is that?" asked Yolante.

"Why, Granada itself, our beautiful Granada," answered Antonio, with enthusiasm; "Melegnano, as the old gipsy people used to call it. Ah! how I long to show you all its beauties—the red towers of the Alhambra, the marble courts, the exquisite richness of its carvings, its arcades, its gardens, its fountains. And not the Alhambra alone, but throughout Granada itself are such beauties to be seen! Never was such a city, methinks, in all the world before; and I cannot forget that it is to the Moors we owe these wondrous beauties which are a perpetual feast. I hate the thought of treating them with cruelty and injustice; and above and beyond that is the fear of setting race against race, Moor against Christian, and deluging the land with blood and rapine. For none can read without a shudder the story of the past; and if the passions of men be once aroused, who knows what the end will be?"

Yolante looked at him with a little thrill of fear and wonder.

“Will it be war?” she asked in a whisper.

“That is what we have been seeking to discover,” he answered gravely. “That is what has taken us through the towns and villages of the Alpuxarras. We went in company. We were a mixed party. There was Ibrahim, more Moor than Jew, known to many and trusted by all; there were yonder stalwart brothers, with Morisco blood in their veins, though habited like Spaniards; and there was myself, a Spanish noble’s son, trusted by all Christian and Catholic folk. So together we journeyed, together we went through the places, asking of all we met what they did think and feel. We have long known that there is a strange restlessness abroad—that the people are uneasy; that there are secret meetings in Morisco houses; that there is a secret arming which makes many apprehensive. In the Albaycin there is a stirring which bodes no good, methinks.”

“What is the Albaycin?” interrupted Yolante, who was drinking in every word of her companion’s with the most vivid interest. “Methinks I know not that name.”

“It is the Moorish quarter in the city of Granada,” answered Antonio; “that is to say, the greater part of its inhabitants are Moriscos. We have some citadels there garrisoned by Spanish troops, and the mosques are now transformed into Christian churches; but for the most part that quarter is inhabited by Moors, and already there has been trouble there. By a stupid mistake on the part of a sentry

at the Alhambra only last April, an alarm was given that the Albaycin was rising and arming, and our soldiers rushed to the quarter ready to slay without mercy. Luckily it proved a false alarm; but the presence of armed soldiers coming thus in the night gave great offence, and the knowledge that this hated edict is hanging over their heads rouses in the people a sullen sense of injury. The Count of Tendilla, son of the captain-general, who is very popular with the Moriscos, and always treats them well, addressed them from the steps of the high altar after Mass the following Sunday, and strove to appease their wrath and their alarm; but the uneasy feeling yet remains, and must do so unless we can get these edicts revoked. And I fear me there is no hope of that. His Majesty refuses to listen to the voice of counsel, and none now dare to offer it."

"And if there be war," suddenly asked Eudo, with flashing eyes, "what of those who dwell within the walls of Granada? What of my sister who comes hither with me? Is she to be exposed to peril on my account? Rather would I return forthwith to Malaga, and send her home with our friendly captain, who would care for her like a father, and deliver her safe and sound at home."

"But so would not I!" cried Yolante, whose cheek was flushed with excitement. "I have oftentimes longed to see the great world—strange lands, beautiful sights—and here I have them all! But I have longed for other things too. I never read the tales of chivalry, the story of brave, heroic deeds, but I long to witness such myself. I long to be in the midst of storm and strife and the clang of arms.

Women and girls have done brave deeds ere this, and why should no chance come to me? Nay, Eudo, thou needst not smile. It is no idle boast. I am not afraid. I shrink not from the thought of peril. Sad indeed at heart I am that such things should be; yet if they must needs come, let me be there to see. I can at least tend the wounded and nurse the sick, if I may not gird on sword and buckler and ride forth to the fray myself."

"And if you did, fair lady, I trow you would carry all before you," spoke Antonio, with a glance of vivid admiration. "You must seek to kindle a like spirit in my sister Juanita. She is ever reading the page of chivalry, but methinks she would soon tremble and shrink before the perils of warfare, daughter of the house of Aguilar though she be. She must learn of you, fair cousin—one of England's Amazons!"

"And which side would yonder caballeros take, were such a struggle to commence?" asked Yolante, with a glance towards the pair in front riding along at the head of the long *cortége*.

At that question Antonio shook his head in some doubt, his face growing grave again.

"Nay; that is what we are all asking, not of these brethren alone, but of many in like case with them. We have now in Granada one Don Fernando de Valor in his Spanish nomenclature, but by descent of the race of the Khalifs of Cordoba. He is of the house of Aben Humeya, and might be a source of trouble were he to take part in the rising. He is young, handsome, extravagant; indeed,

he is so deeply in debt that he is a prisoner in the city at this time, on parole in his own house—not for debt alone, but for drawing his dagger in the municipal council of which he is a member. It is with such fiery spirits as his, and those of that pair of brethren yonder, that we shall have most trouble, I trow. They are of the stuff that makes leaders, and they understand all too well our methods of warfare and our fashion of thinking. If they throw in their lot with the Moriscos when all hope of peace is over, we shall have a more difficult task before us than that of quelling an insurrection throughout the Alpuxarras, though, as God knows, that would be bad enough.”

“ Yet if they be Moors by descent, can one wonder that they should side with their brethren,” questioned Yolante, “ and especially so when they deem those brethren unjustly oppressed ? ”

“ Ay, there is much to say on that score,” answered Antonio gravely. “ Loyal Spaniard though I be, I may not deny the unwisdom and oppressive policy of the king. But I must not damp your spirits, fair cousin, by evil auguries; and, in sooth, in Granada we shall be safe enough, no matter what betides without its walls. We have strong garrisons there, and though the Albaycin be thronged with Moriscos, yet such discipline and order is maintained in the city that any rising in that quarter would instantly be put down with a strong hand. I trow that it is not in Granada that the peril will lie, but along the innumerable valleys of the Alpuxarras, where a small Christian community dwells in the midst of a Morisco population, and where a general

rising of the latter would mean terrible things for all servants of the Cross."

"But Christian armies would go forth to succour and save them!" cried Yolante. "They would not suffer their brethren in the faith to be slaughtered like sheep!"

"All will be done that can be, doubt it not," answered Antonio, "for we have reason to know how cruel a foe the Moor can be when once his savage passions are stirred into life. But let us not too readily presage misfortune and woe. Let us pray that our Lady and the blessed saints and holy angels will prevail to avert this coming peril, or to guide us safely through it if it come."

"I will pray, too, to the Lord of heaven and earth," answered Yolante; "for we know that there is one Mediator between God and men, even the man Christ Jesus."

Antonio gave a quick look around him that seemed instinctive rather than the result of any suspicion of being overheard, since they were riding through a narrow gorge, where only two or three could keep abreast, and the clatter of the horses' iron shoes upon the stones drowned all other sounds, so that only those riding together could hear what was spoken. Then drawing somewhat nearer to his companion, he said in a low tone,—

"Have a care, Doña Yolante, how you speak even good words that might arouse suspicion in the minds of the ignorant; for one never knows how such things are carried, and the Holy Office seems to have eyes and ears everywhere. It is better to invoke the saints and our Lady than

even the Lord of heaven and earth. For the 'heretics,' as they are called, will do the latter and refuse the former, and thus suspicion may be aroused without cause. Such of us as have English blood in our veins, or have dealings with that great nation, have need to exercise the greater caution, since the Pope has excommunicated its sovereign, and looks upon it as a nest of heresy."

Yolante bent a quick glance upon Antonio's face, and thought that in his eyes she read both sympathy and interest. But she felt that she must know her ground rather better ere she sought to speak of these matters. She had been cautioned to walk warily and use all discretion in the land whither she went, and she felt that the caution had not been given without cause.

And in truth the wonders of the way now engrossed her to the exclusion of all else. Never before had she dreamed of such marvellous beauties. She looked down into smiling valleys, where orange and citron, mulberry and sugar-cane grew in luxuriant abundance, watered by a hundred tiny rills which had been dug by the industry of the Moors of the past, and still served to irrigate the country, which had not yet fallen back into waste and desolation. On the higher terraces waved the products of a more northern clime—hemp and flax and corn fields and olive groves—and beyond that, again, pine woods and rugged precipices, towered over by lofty peaks, where the winter snows lay thick and were long in the melting. In other places they beheld vineyards smiling in the sunshine, and saw the Moors gathering their vintage with songs and

dancing. Everything was new, beautiful, wonderful to the travellers, and Yolante found it hard to believe that any dark cloud could hover over this sunny land of promise.

Nor was the journey altogether without other incidents of interest; for at one hostelry where they stopped for the night, they encountered a priest on his way back from a visit to Granada, to his own charge in the little village of Istan, and with him was a bright-faced girl, his sister's daughter, Inez Arroyo by name, who was accompanying him to his home on a visit, and for that night she and Yolante shared a room, and exchanged many girlish confidences together.

Inez told how she had often before stayed at Istan with her good uncle, who was beloved of the Moriscos of that place, though almost the only Christian there. He lived in a small tower hard by the church, and Inez delighted in the free, wild life she could lead there. She was not afraid of the Moriscos, not she! She did not believe in any insurrection. The king would surely hear reason, or some loophole would be found whereby the alcajdes could escape enforcing the edicts. The Moriscos were happy enough beneath the rule of the Christians. They loved their homes and the country of their adoption, which they regarded as their own. They would not wish to do that which must end in their destruction or expulsion; oh no! It was true that they were restless and anxious, but surely some way out of the difficulty would be found.

Each girl was keenly interested in the experiences of the other, and Yolante begged that when Inez returned to

her mother's house in Granada, at the conclusion of her visit to Istan, she would come and see her, and tell her all her adventures. The two girls were about the same age, and, owing to Yolante's fluency with the Spanish tongue, could talk without difficulty together.

"Ah, but you are noble," cried Inez, with sparkling eyes, "and I am but a maiden of the city. I know the beautiful house of the nobles of Aguilar, but how could I dare to present myself at it? I should die of fear!"

"*Ola!* thou dost not know what fear is," cried Yolante, with a light laugh. "I shall expect thee, Inez, and thou must not disappoint me. We are friends; remember that."

"*Muchisimas gracia, señorita!*" cried Inez, as she laid her lips upon the hand extended by Yolante; and they parted, little dreaming what would have happened to one of them before they met again, nor what deadly peril she would have faced.

And now their journey lay through the beautiful Vega of Granada, whilst above them, set like a jewel upon its hills, the wonderful City of the Pomegranate reared its head; and the red towers of the Alhambra, with the domes and cupolas, the walls and gates of the lower town, seemed to shine in the clear, transparent air almost like the New Jerusalem—or so it seemed to Yolante—with its gold and precious stones and pearly portals. She could scarcely take her rapt gaze from the fairy-like spectacle before them; and as each turn in the road brought into view some new object, she scarcely ceased asking questions of her companion. And he was as ready to answer as she to ask;

for Granada was his home, his birthplace, the city of his heart, and he was never weary of describing its beauties and its wonders, which Eudo and Yolante were soon to see with their own eyes.

Eudo had stood the fatigues of the long journey on horseback better than his sister had dared to hope. The air seemed to act like new wine upon him, giving him strength and vitality. Nevertheless he was glad to be so near his journey's end; he looked pale and wan with the fatigue of the last climb, as at last they scaled the heights from the Vega, and saw before them the wonderful horseshoe gates—the Elvira gateway, of which they had heard so much through the ballads and romances of the land.

And now Yolante was silent as they rode into Granada itself, and she looked up at the tall houses in the narrow streets, with their latticed windows, their balconies, their wonderful architecture. She had glimpses of marble courts, wonderful colonnades, tossing fountains, glowing masses of flowers. She gazed upwards at lofty turrets of carved larch adorned with marble, and cornices of shining metal glowing in the dazzling rays of the sinking sun. The streets were full of a motley throng—dark-skinned Moriscos, some in Moorish and some in Spanish dress; gay caballeros afoot or on horseback, with their glittering weapons at their sides; vendors of fruit and bread and sweetmeats, clad in picturesque, brilliant-hued rags; children, some of them half naked, holding out hands for alms, their dark eyes as often as not brimming over with laughter, despite

the whine of their voices ; dignified men in robes of office, walking with measured tread, or pausing beneath some portico to talk together ; ladies with the graceful mantilla draping their faces, leaning forth out of the lattices, or riding upon great flat saddles, their prancing barbs led by grooms in livery, or in plain white linen with gaily-coloured scarves. The whole formed a picture such as Yolante's wildest fancy had never imagined, and held her silent and spellbound, till at last she was awakened from her dream by her horse turning of his own will, following those of the *cortége*, which were ahead, through a wide-arched gateway and into a sumptuous marble courtyard surrounded by a graceful colonnade of fretted stonework, where myrtles, oranges, lemons, and citrons bloomed, and a fountain tossed high its sparkling waters into the air.

A tall, dignified caballero, with a grave, handsome face not unlike that of Antonio, came forward at the head of a troop of indoor servants, and Antonio, springing to the ground, bent his knee for a moment before him, and then, leading him forthwith to the side of Yolante, he took her hand and, as it were, presented it to the newcomer with grave ceremony.

"Señor my father, let me have the honour of yielding up into your hands the Doña Yolante de Montara, who has hitherto been my precious charge."

CHAPTER III.

THE CASA DE AGUILAR.

“IT is like a house of dreams, Juanita!” spoke Yolante with a long breath, as she stood upon a marble terrace sheltered from the sun by a frescoed roof glowing with wonderful tints, and that rich stone tracery of cornice and pillar which marks the workmanship of the Moor. She was looking down the gorge of the Xenil, and over the wide Vega, lying dreaming beneath them in exquisite beauty.

Beside her stood Juanita, a graceful, dark-eyed girl a little older than herself, with very white teeth, a flashing smile, and that almost languid grace of movement which bespeaks the daughter of the south. She had the lace mantilla flung about her head, and her dress trailed upon the marble floor in billows of amber-hued silk. A great black fan was in her hand, fastened to her jewelled girdle by a golden chain. Yolante, in her more simple dress of white, with her hair uncovered and only bound by the riband which she had entwined amid her luxuriant tresses, looked much the younger of the pair, although there was but two years' difference.

Round and round through the gleaming white arcades of the many courts and the terraced gardens beneath, with their luxuriant growth of glowing flowers and glossy-leaved plants of orange, myrtle, or clinging scarlet passion-flower, a pair of eager children—a boy and a girl—were darting about at play, chasing each other and pelting each other with flowers and fruit; whilst within a room near at hand, shadowy and dim, yet gleaming with rich-hued tapestries and glowing silken fabrics, a lady reclined upon a low divan, her attention being divided between a book upon her knee and a morsel of filmy embroidery held in her white hands. Now and again she raised her eyes and looked towards the two girlish figures on the covered terrace without, especially upon the alert and vigorous figure of Yolante, and more than once, as she smiled, a sigh escaped her lips.

“I am glad that it pleases you, sweet cousin,” answered Juanita, speaking in English, with a soft southern accent that was pleasant to the ear; “and, in sooth, I trow it would be hard not to love and admire the house of Aguilar. Long years ago it was built, they say, for the palace of some great Moorish prince—it is said one of the dynasty of Ben-y-Nasr—if that means aught to you. And surely a fairer spot in all Granada could not have been chosen, here in the junction betwixt the two rivers, with hanging gardens over the gorges of the Xenil and the Darro, with the southern sun glowing upon our walls all day, yet sheltered by their thickness from all oppressive heat. And for the rest, why, methinks not even the Alhambra itself can match

these courts and colonnades and halls and stairways for grace and beauty. I, for one, have never envied the Marquess of Mondejar his sumptuous lodging in yonder great palace. The Casa de Aguilar is beautiful enough for me."

Yolante thought the girl might well say that. She had been for a fortnight a dweller within these marble halls and fairy-like galleries and saloons, and yet she felt as though she had not seen all, and that very afternoon had asked of Juanita to take her another round of the palace. By this time the kindness of her relatives had quite won her heart. The grave dignity of her uncle did not overawe her; whilst with Doña Magdalena, his fragile wife, who never forgot, though others might, that she was by birth a daughter of England, she had established tender and filial relations, which had already drawn them closely together. Antonio was her fast friend, almost a second brother; Juanita openly declared that she meant to regard her as a sister; whilst the two little children of the second marriage, Ruy and Pepita, found in the tall, fair English cousin a playfellow whose strength and energy were a constant source of delight and wonder, and whose endless supply of new games and new stories imparted a charming element into life.

But the centre of interest was not always within the walls of this beautiful house. Already Eudo and Yolante began to know by name and by sight some of the many friends and visitors who came and went within its courts and halls. Already they began to understand something

of the anxiety and unrest which prevailed here in this great city of Granada⁴; for each week as it passed made it more and more apparent that the king was resolved to throw to the winds all considerations of policy, clemency, and reason, and to insist upon the proclamation and enforcement of the tyrannical edicts which for well-nigh a century had been allowed to remain a dead letter in the land.

“There are caballeros coming to-day to consult with my father,” spoke Juanita suddenly. “Antonio told me as much. Don Garcia de Manriques has been upon some mission of late, and has now returned. Doubtless he will have somewhat to relate. And methinks if he did go he would take with him his sworn friend and comrade, Don Luis del Marmol Carvajel, or, as we generally call him, Don Luis de Marmol. He hath a ready pen, and is ambitious to write the story of the Moors of Granada and their struggles with the sons of Spain. I trow they will both be here to-day, and likely also Don Pedro de Vilchea. He did lose his leg in some affray in the mountains not long since—at least not so very long, since I can remember him ere it happened—and now he goes about with a wooden leg, so that some do call him Don Pedro Pie-de-palo. But for all that he is a notable warrior, and, they say, will fight as well with one leg as many men do with two. He hath a face as brown as a Morisco, and a pair of fiery eyes that seem to pierce you through like swords. I trow he would almost affright a foe by his glance alone. But you will doubtless see him ere long for yourself.”

“Will the caballeros come hither after the conference is

ended?" asked Yolante, who was eager to see and learn all that she could of the city and its ways.

"I think it likely," answered Juanita, making play with her big fan, and smiling out at Yolante through her long lashes—"I think it likely, fair cousin, for men are curious creatures."

Yolante smiled back, not entirely understanding the veiled innuendo; but she thought it likely that any caballeros coming to the house of Aguilar might well desire to have words with its gracious mistress and beautiful daughter ere taking their leave.

A sound of voices below caused the girl to look over the low parapet by which they stood, and she saw that Eudo was ascending by the zigzag terraced paths which led downwards towards the gorge itself, and that with him were those two stalwart caballeros Don Miguel and Don Manuel, who had ridden in the same cabalgada from Malaga to Granada, and with whom Eudo had often held long conversations whilst Antonio was entertaining his sister.

In a few minutes the three had gained the spot where the two girls stood, and the guests were bowing low to the ladies with true Spanish punctilio. Doña Magdalena, on seeing them, advanced from the open window and gave them gracious welcome; and the whole party moved slowly through an archway and into a beautiful colonnaded court, sheltered alike from sun and wind, where flowers bloomed and fountains played, and where divans and luxurious lounges stood beneath the overhanging arches, and bespoke a place of rest and habitation. The ladies seated them-

selves, and Don Miguel placed himself beside Yolante. His face wore an expression of earnest expectation not unmixed with anxiety. She was interested in this pair of brothers of mixed nationality. Eudo had visited them in their own house hard by the Albaycin, though not exactly within its limits; and he had told her of their life and ambitions, and their ardent desire that peace should be preserved betwixt the rival races in Southern Spain.

"I trust, señor," spoke Yolante in a low voice, covered by the light laughter of Juanita, Eudo, and Don Manuel, "that your anxieties are somewhat abating, and that the fears of strife in so fair a land will pass away. It seems to me that in this city and country the two races, despite their differences, live together in such peace and harmony that it is hard to think they would soon turn into bitter foes. Even if these edicts were to be enforced by command of His Majesty, would they press so very hardly upon his Moorish subjects?"

"So hardly, señorita, that methinks my people would sooner die fighting to the last than submit," spoke Don Miguel, with a curious flash in his brilliant eyes. "Think you it is a light thing to be deprived at one blow of one's faith, one's language, one's customs, one's liberty? For long we have been the subject race, but as a race we have our being. This edict aims at wiping us out as a nation. Let it be enforced for a generation, and the Moors of Spain will cease to exist."

"You say 'us' and 'my people,' señor," said Yolante, as her eyes dwelt for a moment upon the distinctively

Spanish dress of the caballero; "and yet—and yet—I had thought—I had heard—"

"That I was as much Spaniard as Moor? Is it not so? Yes; and there is something of truth in it. The blood of both nations runs in my veins. I have loved the Spaniards, and I love the Moors; but if it come to war, if it come to a grievous rupture betwixt those nations, then must I and such as I cast in our lot either on one side or the other—either with the oppressor or with the oppressed. Lady, whither would your heart lead you, were you in such a case as I?"

Yolante felt indeed that the choice might be a hard one, since she knew that the Spanish nobles and ecclesiastics of Granada and its environs deprecated most strongly the action of the king, holding it to be unjust, and impolitic in the extreme. But she was saved the difficulty of an answer by an interruption which startled them both. A deep-toned voice just behind them spoke in these words,—

"Thinkest thou I am come to send peace on the earth? Nay, rather a sword. Let all soldiers of the Cross be ready to follow the Cross. Sad may be strife and warfare, but who knows that the hand of the Lord be not in it?—Don Miguel de Solis, the cross shines yet upon your brow. The choice for you may be a hard one, but the name of Christ is upon you. You cannot choose but follow Him. You cannot draw sword on behalf of the infidel against the Christian."

The speaker was a man clad in the long gown of the Franciscan friar. He was of great stature, and his face—

as though through fasting and toil—glowed with a strange fervour. Yolante knew him. Few dwellers in Granada did not know Father Christoval de Molina, a scion of a noble house, who had adopted the religious life, but was in the confidence of all the nobles and the Christian population. He was also constantly to be seen in company with one Father Albotodo, a priest who dwelt within the limits of the Albaycin, and had won the confidence of the Moorish population to a very high degree. These two earnest and devout men were a distinct power in Granada at that time, and were seeking with might and main to avert the threatened calamity, preaching patience on the one side and all possible forbearance on the other. But Father Christoval could utter stern reproof where he deemed it needful, and his look was bent with some severity upon this young man, who seemed to be wavering in his allegiance to the cross of Christ.

Don Miguel lowered his glance, and made the customary obeisance to the priest. In his outward life he conformed rigidly to the laws which enforced attendance at Christian worship upon all, and his orthodoxy had never been seriously called in question. But Yolante suddenly surprised a curious gleam in those luminous dark eyes, and she felt that there were reservations in this man's mind which might make him a dangerous ally in times like these.

“ We must pray that the Lord and our blessed Lady, with all the holy saints, will intercede, and that bloodshed and strife may be averted,” spoke the father, in the same measured tones. “ But and if this prayer be not answered

according to our desires, if once again the banners of the Cross and of the Crescent are waved aloft in strife, then there must be no halting between two opinions for such as you, my son. The cross is on your brow; the name of Christ is upon you. You must fight beneath that banner, or you must stand aside whilst others fight. But you must never stain your hands with Christian blood, for that is a sin for which a man so stained might scarce find forgiveness here or hereafter. Your duty to God comes first; all other claims sink into insignificance before it. Remember that, my son, and be warned in time. Your case may be a hard one, but so will the victory of the righteous cause be the more glorious."

Still Don Miguel spoke not in reply, and the Father scarce seemed to expect it. Moreover, at that moment the sound of approaching voices made itself heard—a gay and lively tumult of sound—and through the opposite arch there advanced as it were a wave of brilliant colours that broke up into its component parts as it passed into the inner court; and Yolante beheld quite a galaxy of gay caballeros advancing towards them, richly clad, sparkling with jewels. It was a picturesque and gallant assembly, ready at the close of the day's grave business to enjoy an hour in the presence of the ladies of the house, to sip Moorish coffee from curiously-chased cups, to eat fruit and sweetmeats handed by soft-footed servants, and listen to the sound of music from some unseen players, which mingled harmoniously with the ripple of gay and gallant badinage.

Yolante looked around her with keen interest. She knew by sight the stately Marquess of Mondejar and his two sons, the bold Count of Tendilla and the gay Don Antonio de Mendoza, who was a chosen comrade and friend to her cousin Antonio, his namesake. But she did not know the rest of the company, though she was sure that the gaunt but soldier-like man with the bronzed face and the wooden leg must be the Don Pedro of whom she had heard. There were quite half a dozen other caballeros richly dressed, and bearing the unmistakable impress of high birth and breeding. As she was looking from one to the other, wondering who each might be, her cousin Antonio brought up to her side the one who had most struck her girlish fancy out of all that gay assemblage, and presented him to her under the name of Don Garcia de Manriques. He was a singularly noble-looking knight, noticeable amongst his comrades for his fair skin and golden-brown hair, which curled back crisply from his face, framing it like a halo. The days of curling lovelocks had not come. Men wore their hair short, though not so closely clipped as in modern days. Don Garcia's eyes were dark blue in colour, looking black in moments of excitement. He was very tall—taller even than the brothers De Solis—and his dress was of white cloth and velvet ornamented with silver cord, and the ruff round his neck was edged with pearls. Yolante could not but think what a mark he would make in the English queen's court, where beauty of face and figure went for so much and won such distinction.

But already Don Garcia was speaking, and that, too, to her surprise, in English, with singular fluency and ease.

"Yes, señor, I am not long from the land of my birth," she answered; "and in truth all I see here fills me with admiration and delight. I have not yet been into the Albaycin, though I long to do so; but I have wandered through some of the wondrous halls of the Alhambra and the gardens of the Generalife, and I have felt as though I walked in fairyland: all seemed too fair to belong to this earth."

"It is indeed a lovely land," he answered; "and I, for one, cannot forget that it is to the Moors we owe our marble palaces, our hanging gardens, our smiling vegas with their olive groves, vineyards, and mulberry trees. I have but just returned from a journey through the Alpuxarras, and afresh at every turn am I astonished at what the industry of these people has accomplished. It will be grievous if we may not live at peace with them in the future, as we have done in the past."

"Methinks you have come hither to talk of that very thing, señor," spoke Yolante; whilst Eudo drew near to listen, having been likewise attracted by the face and bearing of Don Garcia. His manner was more free and frank and friendly than that of the other nobles, not less dignified, but distinctly less ceremonious, and this was an attraction to both brother and sister.

"Can it be true that there is danger of insurrection?" asked Eudo, very low. "If the worst came to the worst, would not the Moriscos submit, rather than bring ruin upon

themselves and the land of their adoption and their love? —for such methinks would come were war to ravage its peaceful valleys.”

“In sooth I fear it,” answered Don Garcia; “and here in Granada I believe submission would be preferred to the unequal struggle with the power of the Spanish monarch. But away in the heart of yonder hills, where the Moriscos are as ten to one, where the world beyond is an unknown land, and where they believe that the Barbary corsairs and the Turks, ruled by the Sultan, will rally to their aid if needful, is it strange that they should choose revolt rather than submission to laws so abhorrent to them, and which aim at destroying them as a nation from off the face of the earth? They know nothing of the forces which His Majesty can, and will if needful, bring to bear against them. They only think that they by rising will in turn become the victors, and win back Southern Spain for their own again. Aben Farax has been amongst them—I am certain of it. I heard of him from Aben Aboo, one of our best friends amongst the leading Morisco families. That means fresh mischief afloat, if I mistake me not.”

“Who is Aben Farax?” asked Yolante, with keen interest.

“He is by trade a dyer here in this city of Granada, where he has amassed considerable wealth. But although he follows this humble calling, the blood of kings is in his veins; for he is of the race of the Abencerrages, and he hates the Christians with an undying hatred, and I misdoubt me if he conforms as others do to the existing laws. He lives in the Albaycin, in a house shut in by high walls, and is

seldom seen outside the Moorish quarter. But his trade takes him hither and thither through the Alpuxarras; and early in the year, after it had been announced that the edicts were to be enforced with only one more year of grace, he went hither and thither inciting the mountain people to rebellion, promising them that if they would rise throughout the district at a given signal, he would raise in and about Granada a force of eight thousand men, join with them his countrymen in the plains of the Vega, and together overpower the garrison of the Alhambra, and become once more masters of the Moorish capital. It was all planned to take place upon Holy Thursday or Good Friday, when he had astutely reckoned that we should all be engrossed in our religious devotions."

"But it did not come to pass!" spoke Eudo. "There was no such rising or attack."

"No; methinks the secret was too widely known—they trusted it to too many. The Moriscos and Christians are linked by many ties. The Christians knew that the captain-general himself was going to remonstrate with His Majesty in person. A peaceful solution was hoped for. The more thoughtful and sober Moriscos were against violent measures. It was said that the secret was told in the confessional. At any rate it leaked out, and that very fact saved Granada and the district. But a plan frustrated is not always a plan abandoned. Aben Farax has been through the Alpuxarras again. I misdoubt me but that that may mean mischief afoot."

"But would Granada be in peril?" asked Yolante, with

eyes that shone vividly, almost eagerly. There was no sign of fear in their depths, and Don Garcia smiled as he looked at her.

“There are ten thousand Moriscos in the Albaycin,” he answered; “and although a great number of these are well disposed, and are against any show of resistance, feeling the hopelessness of the struggle, yet there are many fiery spirits amongst them, and a mob stirred to desperation and despair can become a dangerous element in any city.”

“But surely the garrison of the Alhambra and the citizens themselves, armed for such a rising, would be sufficient to protect the place against a Moslem rabble?” cried Eudo.

“I think so,” answered Don Garcia; “but an armed Moslem rabble is an ugly thing to have let loose upon us.—I say not this to affright you, lady. Indeed, had I not seen that you were a stranger to fear, I had not spoken of this at all. Have a care how you repeat to Doña Magdalena or Doña Juanita the words I have spoken to you. But the maidens of the north are heroines all. Methinks the blood of the Vikings runs in their veins, as I am proud to know it does in mine.”

“Ah! you look less like a Spaniard than like a son of the north, señor,” spoke Yolante, with eager interest; and then he told her somewhat of himself and his descent, and how that there had been a Scandinavian princess amongst his forbears whom he was said greatly to resemble, and how that he had himself travelled in northern lands, and had visited Ireland, Scotland, and England in turn, and

had borne away much admiration for the method of government he had seen there, and for the bravery and sturdiness of its people.

They paced up and down the marble colonnade deep in talk, forgetting for a while the troubled themes which had occupied them during the earlier hours of the day. Juanita's guitar had been brought out, and she was playing and singing softly to a ring of admirers; whilst Ruy and Pepita danced about like sprites, rattling the castanets in time to the rhythm of their sister's song. It was a charming scene, with the soft evening sunlight overhead, and the murmur of the fountain as a never-ceasing accompaniment. It was hard to believe in such a spot that peril or strife could be threatening, and for a while Yolante cast away all her anxious thoughts, giving herself up to the happiness of the hour and the charm of her companion's talk.

Her eyes lighted presently upon Don Miguel, who seemed, as it were, to have drawn away from the rest, and was standing leaning against a slender column, rapt in moody thought. As she passed him she gave him a friendly smile, and he stepped up to her side as though in response.

"Señorita, did I hear you say that as yet you had not visited the Albaycin, and desired to do so? Will you favour me thus far, and let me be your guide there at some early date? Your brother will accompany you, and any other whom you may wish. But I trow I can show you our Moorish quarter as well as any other cicerone."

"Or better," spoke Don Garcia, in courtly accents.

“Don Miguel de Solis will be the best of guides, I trow. He will show you the famous Moorish wall and some of its many thousand towers, which may well rank as one of the world’s wonders.—Señor Don Miguel, have you news of Don Fernando de Valor? I have been sorry to hear, since my return to Granada, that he has been in some sort of trouble again. Is it true that he is confined to his house on his parole for some act of unseemly violence? I will seek an early opportunity to visit him. I would that that fiery spirit of his could be somewhat held in check. It is like to harm him in his future career.”

A curious gleam shone in the eyes of Don Miguel, but neither of his companions could see it, since they were pacing side by side. His voice was quite level and calm as he replied,—

“It is true that he is at present restrained from going abroad, but I trust that this hindrance will not long rest upon him. As for that headstrong temper of his, we must remember that he comes of the race of the Humeya, and the blood of Moorish kings is not easily tamed.”

Don Garcia looked suddenly at the speaker; but the face was quiet and impassive. After a few more turns up and down, Don Miguel made his adieu to Yolante, after again requesting her to permit him to be her escort through the Albaycin; and when he had quitted the court with his brother, who seemed of a less gloomy disposition than himself, Don Garcia, who had looked after the pair with gravely curious gaze, turned to Yolante with a smile, saying,—

"Spaniard or Morisco, which do you call him, señorita?"

"I think that he has played at being a Spaniard—has tried to be a Spaniard—but that at heart he is a Moor through all," she answered in a low voice. "I cannot tell you why I think it. I have little knowledge of him, but I seem to feel it. How is it, señor, that with such natures as his, noble as I take them to be, the faith of Christ has so little hold on them that, though baptized and reared in the true faith, the grip of the prophet is still strong upon them?"

Don Garcia threw a quick look around him, much as Antonio had done once or twice when the question of religion had been mooted. He did not attempt to reply to her words till he had led her out upon one of the open terraces overlooking the valley of the Darro, where they were safe from being overheard, and he could speak more fully and freely.

"Doña Yolante, you have put a question which troubles many minds in these days. To you who have come from free England I can answer it, for you will understand. I never saw the answer so clearly till I had lived for a while amongst your people. It is the Holy Office, as men call it, that has done this."

"You mean the Inquisition?" spoke Yolante, in a whisper.

"Yes," he answered, in the same low tone, "that tool of the devil—for to you I will dare so to call it. It seeks to compel a faith by fear, by fines, by torment if need be. To escape its horrors, the Moors have brought their children

for generations to the priests for baptism and instruction, but at home have instilled hatred into them against the doctrines which are promulgated by such methods. Mohammed slays with the sword those who oppose him, but there is no such infernal machinery known amongst the infidels as is brought to bear upon them by the Christians. Good and holy priests dwell amongst us—I reverence them and Holy Church, of whom I am a true son—but there be things done in this land of Spain which are a disgrace to the name of Christ. The Moors know it—have they not good cause?—and thus the truths of Christianity seem to them an idle mockery. Love and pity and tenderness are taught in word, and side by side they see and hear of nameless horrors of cruelty and treachery. Is it not enough? Can we blame them overmuch for seeking to Allah and his prophet? Were the faith to be shown them as it is in your land, lady, heretics though the Church may call you, or some of you, I trow they would learn to love and reverence it in time. But in Spain, in the days of Philip and the Inquisition, never!”

Don Garcia ceased. He knew that he had said enough already to consign him to one of those terrible subterranean dungeons, should such words ever be repeated. Yet, looking into Yolante's face, he felt no fear. Those were days when men with bated breath were beginning to foretell that the Inquisition would prove the ruin of Spain, as indeed it has done. But they spoke with locked doors and in whispers; and even bold men like Don Garcia experienced from time to time a thrill of horror and fear

when a band of black-robed alguazils of the Holy Office was seen approaching down the street.

But his words had given to Yolante the clue she sought. She understood how hateful a thing Christianity could be made to look. A great pity welled up in her heart towards the persecuted Moriscos. She longed to be able to stretch out a hand to them ; but what could any effort of hers avail against the rising tide of fear and hatred that seemed slowly and surely gathering ?

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE ALBAYCIN.

DON RODRIGO raised no objection to the proposed visit of his niece to the Albaycin. He only deputed his son to accompany her, and to take with them a small guard of soldiers. But as it seemed to be the fashion in the city for the nobles, especially if they had ladies in their company, to ride with a rather large following, this did not greatly surprise Yolante. What did surprise her was that Doña Magdalena, who seldom cared to leave the shelter of the Casa de Aguilar save to attend Mass in the cathedral on Sundays and feast days, announced her intention of making one of the party; though Juanita shrugged her pretty shoulders, and declared that nothing would induce her to put her nose within the Albaycin again. The streets were narrow and dark and dirty; the people looked savage and sullen, and frightened her: it was quite bad enough having Moriscos swarming all over the other parts of Granada without seeking them out in their own haunts.

“Ah, but I am so sorry for them!” spoke Doña Magdalena to her niece, as they rode side by side through the

narrow streets towards the Moorish quarter. Eudo, with Don Miguel, was a little in advance; and Antonio, with the guard, brought up the rear. The light barbs upon which the ladies rode paced side by side, and enabled them to converse together at ease. "I am heavy at heart with the fear of what may happen. I would seek to show confidence and interest in our infidel neighbours, who have done so much for the land of their adoption. I cannot bear the thought that Christians should show themselves harsh, cruel, tyrannical. It grieves me more than I can say that we should give cause to the enemy to blaspheme. I would lay down my life for these poor creatures, if that would help them. I do not fear their sullen looks or fierce gestures; I am too sorry for them."

But there were no sullen looks encountered to-day by the party on their circuit of such places as Don Miguel desired to show them. Perhaps it was his presence with the ladies, perhaps their smiles and gracious words, perhaps the popularity of Don Antonio, who was greeted with cordial respect by all; but wherever they went they received courteous welcome, and the Moriscos seemed to vie with one another in showing attention to the party.

"It is truly a marvellous work," cried Eudo, as they stood upon a portion of the great wall, which the Moors had built long years ago around the city of Granada, and gazed at the panorama before them, and counted some of its thousand towers. "Truly, Don Miguel, your Moorish ancestors were a wonderful race. They have taught the wilderness to blossom like a rose, and upon the mountain

tops they have set a city more beauteous than a dream, yet girt about with strength and might."

"Ah, Granada, Granada, city of the pomegranate, that doth glitter like a star, thy gold and marble towers shining through the dark foliage of orange groves! thou art like an enamelled vase sparkling with hyacinths, emeralds, rubies, and diamonds." The young man spread out his hands as though he would embrace the whole city, and seemed about to break into one of those rhapsodies which the Arabic writers of the day seem unable to refrain from when Granada is their theme. But suddenly pulling himself up short, he turned from the impassioned Morisco into the dignified Spaniard, and giving his hand to Yolante, prepared to descend the tower stairs.

"Pardon me, lady, if I forget myself; but Granada is to me as the apple of the eye. My heart is bound up in her. I forget my manhood when I think of all that we have lost in losing her. But pardon me; our loss has been your gain—the gain of the cause of the Cross—and I must submit, and seek to forget that I am Moor as well as Christian."

"Can a man be both?" asked Yolante, giving him an earnest glance of sympathy. "Both by descent, perhaps; but how is it possible to serve Mohammed and Christ at one and the same time?"

"The Moriscos have found the way," he answered, with an enigmatic smile. "But now, lady, whither shall we go next? You have seen our mosques, now transformed into churches, our streets and walls, towers and baths, so soon

to be destroyed, alas! You have ascended the tower of San Salvador, whence in moments of peril the alarm bell peals forth. What else is there that you would like to see or do? You have but to command—I to obey.”

“I thank you, Señor Don Miguel. Then, if I may choose, I would ask that you should take me to the house of our friend of the voyage, the venerable Ibrahim Ben Abner, which, I have heard, lies within the limits of the Albaycin. He did promise to my brother and me a welcome, if ever we would visit him; and he told us of his two daughters, Esther and Zareefa, whom he said he had brought up according to the customs of the West, and had not secluded them in a separate place of abode like others. He said that they would be honoured and delighted by a visit. May we not go to his house, then? I would so gladly see what such an one is like. And gladly, too, would I greet Señor Ben Abner himself; for his talk did greatly interest me when we sat at the same table on the journey, and he told us of Spain and its troubles and dangers.”

“Then let us go and see Ben Abner,” answered Don Miguel at once. “You have made a good choice, señorita, for his house is one of the most ancient and richest in all the Albaycin. It was founded, if the legend be true, by King Badia of ancient fame, or by some follower of his; and upon the tower still swings the vane of Ibn Habus, which has a history of its own. Very highly honoured will Ben Abner and his house be by your visit. Suffer me to ride on and warn him of your coming. Your guard will know the way, and lead you safely thither.”

It took but a short time for the little cabalgada to reach the richly-chased brazen gates which led into the great courtyard of the house of Ben Abner. But short as the time was, it had been enough for the master of the house to make some speedy preparations for the reception of his guests; and he was standing in the courtyard in his picturesque flowing robes, with Don Miguel beside him, and a multitude of coloured slaves and servants flocking round in picturesque medley of brilliant colour, to give a grave but very courteous welcome to his guests, and conduct them with no small ceremony through some wonderful courts and arcades, glowing with all the tints of the rainbow from the arabesque work of pavement and ceiling, into a great airy room or hall lined with deep divans covered with richest embroideries, and redolent of perfume rising from some unseen source, where a second white-bearded and eagle-eyed Morisco stood in a dignified attitude of repose, and bowed low as the party entered.

At the far end of the room was an archway, over which hung a silken curtain, and Yolante as they entered fancied that this curtain moved, and that she heard a sound as of stifled laughter or subdued exclamation behind it.

Doña Magdalena was conducted by their host to a seat of honour upon one of the divans, and was instantly served with fruit and coffee, as were also Yolante and the whole party in rapid succession—every vessel being of gold or ivory, and incrustated with gems.

Don Antonio, however, had gone forward and saluted the second robed Morisco whom they had noted at their

entrance, and it seemed to Eudo and his sister as though he greeted him with gladness, and had some special pleasure in meeting him there. The girl's eyes dwelt upon his face with interest, and the voice of her host spoke words which showed that he had marked and understood her mood.

"Yonder friend is that Muley Abdallah Aben Aboo of whom perchance you have heard. He dwells at Guajer el Alto, under the special favour and safeguard of the captain-general of the city. He is of ancient birth and lineage, and trusted alike by Moors and Christians. He has come hither to seek an audience with the marquess, which has been promised for the morrow."

"I trust he brings no ill news from the Alpuxarras?" spoke Doña Magdalena, with veiled anxiety in her eyes. For as the days fled by in quick succession, and the time approached nearer and nearer for the expiration of the day of grace and the institution of harsher measures, none who understood the position of affairs could fail to be anxious; and the perfect tranquillity which reigned throughout the quarter of the Albaycin did not seem to all those in authority quite the best of signs.

"Nothing worse, madam, than that the criminal El Senex has escaped from prison and made his way to the Alpuxarras, where he has many friends," answered Aben Aboo, coming forward and making a dignified salutation to Doña Magdalena, whom he had seen once on the occasion of a visit to the Casa de Aguilar. "His is a wild spirit, as doubtless you do know, and he has been

guilty of the crime of murdering several Christians. That is to say, no man can well doubt his guilt, although the crime was not proved upon him. He has been in prison here ever since, but has had time to effect his escape through the assistance of friends from without. He and Aben Farax have been seen together, and are journeying in company through the towns and villages of the district. But the dyer has to do this in the way of his business. We need not anticipate mischief too quickly."

A vivid gleam shone for a moment in the eyes of Don Miguel, and he dropped his lids as though to conceal it. The faces of the two older men were impassive and courteously smiling. They made no further allusion to the affairs of the moment, but Ben Abner entertained and interested his guests by some account of his historic house, and by the sight of some wonderful gems and heirlooms which had come down to him from his Jewish and Moorish ancestors — cups and chalices, magnificent weapons, embroideries sewn with pearls and precious stones, and jewellery so exquisite and rich that Yolante was lost in admiration, and was at a loss what to say and do when Ben Abner insisted on presenting her with a flexible golden belt of most wonderful workmanship, incrustated with sparkling gems. Had it not been for a sign from Antonio, she would almost have refused it. As it was, catching his glance, she accepted it with a pretty girlish pleasure and shyness which evidently pleased the old man, and almost immediately afterwards he asked the ladies whether he might present to them his wife and

daughters. Upon their gladly assenting, he led the way through the archway behind the silken curtain into a vaulted room, almost more beautiful than the one they had quitted, one side of which was an open arcade of alabaster and porphyry columns, of exquisite lightness and grace, leading out into a glowing garden of citron, orange, myrtle, and pomegranate—such a garden as it seemed impossible could lie behind the high walls of a house in the Albaycin.

Upon a deep divan reclined a beautiful Morisco woman, clad in a mass of white drapery from head to foot, a richly-embroidered scarf draping her head and shoulders. She was past her first youth, and though massive in figure, as Eastern women so often become, was beautiful yet, and grand in her stately pose. By her side stood a sylph-like creature, in robes of gauze which gave her almost the look of a fairy, strings of pearls entwined in her raven tresses, and a short sleeveless jacket of gold-embroidered crimson velvet defining the slender outlines of her figure. Her eyes were like those of a gazelle, soft and dark and timid; yet there was laughter upon her ruby lips, and she looked as though she would fain have sprung forward to meet and greet her father and their guests, had it not been for the quiet immobility of her mother.

There was a third figure in the background—that of a maiden many years older than the fairy creature in white, a girl of at least one-and-twenty summers, tall, majestic, queen-like. She was robed in black, and in the Spanish

manner, and a lace mantilla shaded the rich, dark beauty of her face. In looking at these two beautiful daughters of Ben Abner's, Yolante remembered how she had been told that his first wife had been a Christianized Jewess, whilst his second was a Morisco. Antonio had spoken to her more than once of the beautiful Esther and the sylph-like Zareefa. Both had been brought up with something of the freedom of the daughters of the West; yet the fashion of keeping somewhat closely to their mother's apartments had by no means died out amongst the so-called Christian daughters of the Albaycin.

Yolante presently found herself walking beneath the arcaded pillars side by side with Esther, whilst Doña Magdalena remained within the room with the Morisco mother and daughter. There was something in Esther's face that attracted Yolante—something sad and wistful in the glance of the eyes, whilst the lips were strangely firm and sweet. Hardly knowing how it began, Yolante found herself speaking of her own former life in England, her parents, her brother Eudo, the accident which had invalidated him, the suddenly-arranged journey to Spain, and her vivid delight in this wonderful city, which so far transcended her wildest dreams.

"Ah! but you should have stayed in free, happy England," spoke Esther, turning her luminous gaze upon the fair-haired girl. "Alas for this hapless land! *Ay de mi, Granada!* Woe for the days that are coming, when fire and sword shall ravage yonder smiling valleys, and destruction shall stalk through it—desolation and mourning and woe!"

“Nay, say not so,” pleaded Yolante eagerly. “Surely there is hope. All men say that patience and moderation may yet bring about a peaceful settlement. The better Moriscos, like your father, and Aben Aboo, and others whose names I have heard, are anxious above all that peace shall be preserved. Surely their counsels will have weight with the masses beneath, who look to them for guidance. Surely, surely—”

Yolante paused, for Esther’s wide gaze was upon her face. Something in that look arrested her further words.

“When the pot is seething, it is the scum which rises to the top,” spoke she, in the accents of calm certainty. “Will a nation calmly submit to be wiped out of existence?—for that is the aim and purport of these edicts, which, if strictly enforced, will lead to that end. I know that your father, the marquess, and innumerable noble and generous Spaniards have done all that is possible to advise the king. I know that in their hearts they pity the Moors, and would gladly let matters rest as they are now. They do not hate the Morisco; they would live at peace with him. But how will it be when the wild hatred of the subjugated race leaps into awful life? How will it be when tales are brought of the massacre of Christians in lonely towns and villages in the Alpuxarras, ere Christian help can reach them? Will they then feel compassion and toleration for the Moor? No; they will fly to arms—and rightly too—for the protection of their brothers, of helpless women and tender children exposed to the lust and fury of a cruel foe. Cruel! Ah, lady,

you know not how cruel the Moor can be once he is roused. And believe me, it is the Christians that have taught him new refinements of cruelty. Has not the Inquisition been established in this land for well-nigh a hundred years? And what have the infidels suffered within its walls?"

"And you yourself?" questioned Yolante, for the moment more absorbed in the personality of this girl than even in the theme she discussed. "With whom will your heart be if such a strife should arise? Nay, fear not to tell me, Esther. I would so gladly be your friend, and share my thoughts with you. I am so grieved for the woes of the Moriscos, and for what they are like to suffer. And yet—and yet—if it came to war, one must desire victory for the banner of the Cross!"

"Ah yes," cried Esther, clasping her hands and gazing straight before her with all her soul in her eyes, "the banner of the Messiah—He who came in lowliness and love to redeem His people, though they knew Him not; He who would draw all men to Himself in love and tenderness, not by fire and sword. Oh, I love Him, I love Him! I would fain be His altogether. My mother taught me that love as a child, and never can I forget it, though such things be done in the name of Christ as are stamped with the devil's sign-manual. Sweet lady, I am a Christian in heart and soul and spirit. I know the dark side of the infidel as well as the smooth one he shows to the world. I know that, were the Moriscos to triumph, a terrible curse and blight must fall upon this

land. Their genius, their industry, their skill are immense ; but, oh, there is a terrible reverse to the picture ! No ; our prayers must ever be for the banner of Christ. Yet alas that that banner should be so darkly stained, and woe to the land upon which the iron hand of the Inquisition closes ! for that also will bring a curse and a judgment."

The girl stood drawn up to her full majestic height, with a look as of a seer in her eyes. Has the light of prophecy ever been altogether quenched in the Christian Church ? Have not all ages known certain souls in which the light of the Spirit shines with strange effulgence, piercing, as it were, the shadows which enwrap this life, and reaching forth into the unseen future ? A thought akin to this was in the mind of Yolante as she gazed upon the rapt face of the girl before her, and felt as though her words were charged with the solemnity of a prophecy.

But there was no time to reply, nor to follow out the train of thought suggested ; for the sound of footsteps of the marble floor and of a girl's light laugh aroused them, and they saw that Ben Abner was leading out his friends into the garden. Eudo was walking with the sylph-like Zareefa, who was chattering to him in her pretty soft Spanish with its piquant Moorish accent, whilst behind them came Antonio, and both Don Miguel and Don Manuel de Solis—for the other brother had now appeared upon the scene—and these three young men came straight over to where the two girls were standing, a certain veiled eagerness in their manner which a keen observer would quickly note.

Yolante did observe the sudden light which leaped into Antonio's eyes as they rested for a moment upon Esther's face before she was aware of their approach, or had descended from the cloudland whither her spirit had soared. He bowed low over the hand extended to him in greeting, and there was something in his manner which struck his cousin as being new and significant. She had seen him many times in the presence of fair ladies, amongst whom he moved and spoke with ease and grace. It was unusual for him to be tongue-tied, and only with his eyes to express that homage which leaped so lightly to his lips at other times. Could it be—?

She did not further pursue this thought then, for Don Miguel spoke, and she let him lead her through the fancifully laid out garden behind the high solid walls, and she had enough to do in admiring the beauties she saw and hearing the stories he had to tell. The whole party was now out in the garden, passing and repassing one another as they paced up and down the shady alleys, or stood to admire the goldfish and silverfish in the fountains, or the bright-hued captive birds in their great alcove guarded by gilded wire. Zareefa opened the door, and at once the birds fluttered about her like a rainbow-tinted cloud. They took grain from her hand or her rosy lips, and she laughed aloud in childish glee, making a charming picture as she stood there amongst her feathered favourites.

Yolante observed that Esther had let Antonio draw her somewhat apart from the rest, and they now seemed to be talking together very earnestly. He had found his

tongue at last, it seemed. But it was not airy nothings that he was speaking, she thought; both faces were far too grave and earnest for that. And then the girl's glance wandered to others of the company, and in so doing lighted upon the face of Don Manuel de Solis, who was standing alone and apart with folded arms and bent brows. His gaze was fixed immovably upon the face of Esther; and as she raised her eyes in speaking to her companion, and the colour deepened in her cheeks, Yolante noted that a sudden darkness seemed to sweep over the countenance of the young Spanish Moor, a lurid light blazed in his eyes, and a look of such deadly hatred was levelled at Antonio as made her blood run cold in her veins. For a moment it seemed to her as though the mask had been dropped, as though she had caught a glimpse of the wild, savage nature of the son of the East as she had heard of it from others. A light shiver shook her frame. If such passions as these were to be let loose throughout a city or district, what terrible deeds might not stain the page of history!

That evening when the light had failed, and she and Eudo had come in from a twilight promenade on one of the sheltered terraces whilst they talked of the experiences of the day, it was to find the great living hall, the central portion of the house, brilliantly lighted with innumerable silver lamps, and a small company, of whom Don Garcia de Manriques was one, standing about the glowing fire of fragrant pine wood which was now often lighted after the sun was set.

He came forward instantly on seeing Yolante, and bent over her hand in greeting. Antonio followed at a short distance, and the four seated themselves in one of those screened alcoves which broke up the monotony of the great hall.

"So you have been to the Albaycin, señorita? What think you of the Morisco quarter and its many and varied sights?"

"I thought it wonderful—some parts beautiful, all strange; strangest, perhaps, that mosques should be converted into Christian churches. I wonder is it wise to enforce our worship upon those who only follow with their eyes or lips, and whose hearts are far away, full of other beliefs? Would it not be the more Christ-like plan first to win their love? and then they will gladly worship with us. In England we have a proverb which warns us from putting the cart before the horse."

"Ah, señorita, that has oftentimes to be done in statecraft and ecclesiastical polity. Arcadia has not yet been discovered, though truly there be moments when it seems very near. But I hear that you did visit also the house of Ibrahim Ben Abner. What thought you of it and its inmates, and his two lovely daughters?"

"I think that Esther is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. I can scarce call her a girl, though her years are not many more than mine own, for she is in thought and speech a woman. I marvel that she is yet unwed, for I have heard it said that in southern lands maidens early become wives, and she must surely have attracted admiration enough and to spare."

Yolante spoke with the frank freedom of her race and training, and Don Garcia smiled, stealing at the same time a glance at his friend. Antonio's olive cheek wore a slight flush, and it was he who answered his cousin's speech.

"Doña Esther has been reared rather as a Spanish maiden than an Eastern one; and though she was early asked in marriage, and that by several notable men, both Moors and Christians, she would not consent to wed with any, and extracted from her father, who dotes upon her, the promise that he will not force her into wedlock against her will. Ben Abner is divided in mind betwixt the joy of her companionship at home and the fear lest any shall think slightingly of one who remains a maid beneath her father's roof so many years after being of age to wed. But her will prevails over any remonstrances from him, and during this past year other matters have occupied men's minds, and there has been little talk of marrying or giving in marriage."

"That little sprite Zareefa is the loveliest creature I have ever seen," spoke Eudo. "I never saw a fairer picture than she made amongst her birds. She seems as light-hearted as one of her feathered favourites themselves. But it was otherwise with her sister. Methought that Doña Esther looked grave to the verge of sadness."

"She has cause," answered Antonio, "in that she fears the worst. She believes not in the lull which seems at present to enwrap the land. She knows little. Since that plot in the spring for a general rising, which it is be-

lieved was betrayed to the priests in the confessional by Christianized Moriscos, scarce one word has reached her ears. But the birds of the air seem to carry whispers, and all such whispers are of coming woe. She fears, too, that hundreds, if not thousands, of those who profess themselves Christians and loyal subjects of His Majesty of Spain, will, in the event of open warfare, either flock to the banner of the Moslem or play the more dangerous part of traitorous friends of the foes they hate. She even distrusts the brothers De Solis, whom I would have answered for without hesitation. And at that I wonder the more, since I have thought that they both have desired her love, and were not far from winning it."

Yolante looked quickly at him.

"You think Don Manuel loves her? Why, so thought I to-day."

"Your eyes are sharp, fair cousin. Tell me, did you think the lady returned his love?"

Did Antonio's voice tremble a little? Yolante could not tell; she answered at once,—

"I saw no sign of it. She seemed otherwise occupied. She was engrossed in your conversation, cousin Don Antonio."

Don Garcia suddenly laughed.

"Well answered, señorita. Engrossed by Don Antonio! Good! And for the rest, let us hope for the best in the days to come, though, for my part, I could wish that the festival of Christmas were safely over."

CHAPTER V.

A STRANGE CHRISTMAS.

“**W**HAT meant Don Garcia by the words he once spoke, that he wished Christmas were well over?”

Eudo asked this question of Antonio, as they sat together by a glowing fire one day when that festival was drawing very near. The English youth was greatly the better for this three months' stay in the clear sunny air of Granada, notwithstanding that for the past fortnight keen winds had swept down the mountain sides, bringing snow and sleet on their wings, and the frost often lay white along the upper ridges towards the city, though the sheltered Vega below lay smiling and verdant. But in spite of the keen cold of night and of early morning, the mid-day sun was almost always hot and bright, and beneath the shelter of the many colonnaded walks the young man could get out daily to breathe the air, and had long since ceased to think of himself as an invalid. He and Yolante had by this time taken their own places in the household, and felt as though they had lived there for years. The life of the city interested them keenly, and despite the

rumours which had been flying about ever since their landing in Spain, the dreaded insurrection seemed as far off as ever, and even the most timorous were hoping that the evil might be averted.

Antonio looked up from the page of Fray Antonio Agapida which he was studying, and passing his hand across his brow, answered,—

“Why, because the Christian festivals have so often been signalled out as being favourable for any uprising amongst the infidels. They know that upon such days our thoughts and our time are given to the duties of our religion, and they think, not without some reason, perhaps, that we are less alert and less likely to be on our guard at such a time. They hoped to surprise us last Easter, and might have done so but for the timely warnings received from Morisco sources. It is possible that, if mischief be hatching, it will come to a head at this coming festival. But no rumour of danger has reached us yet; and since Christmas is now close at hand, I trust our fears are groundless.”

“Surely this cold and snow would be unfavourable to any rising,” said Yolante. “These sons of the south must feel these bitter winds and driving snowstorms more than we of hardier race; and yet even in northern climes warfare is well-nigh suspended during the winter season.”

“I trust it may be so,” answered Antonio; “but the Moors are a strange and determined race.” He glanced down at the page of the book upon his knee. “The historian Agapida, in his narrative of the Moorish wars in the

days of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholics, shows how little was the infidel daunted by hardship and exposure of any description. We must not reckon too confidently upon that. I place more trust in the absence of any threatening reports. Any widespread conspiracy must claim its thousands of confederates, and with the closeness of the tie now existing between Moriscos and Christians in so many places, it would be strange if some did not betray the matter. But even if the Christmas feast passes off in peace, it remains to be seen what will be the effect upon the people when the edicts regarding their national dress, language, and customs begin to be enforced."

At that moment the sound of a firm footfall was heard rapidly approaching, and the curtain being raised, showed the tall, graceful figure of Don Garcia de Manriques, who was intimate enough at the Casa de Aguilar to come and go like one of the family.

A glance at his face showed that he brought tidings. Antonio rose hastily to greet him.

"I came to seek speech with your father. Has Don Rodrigo heard the news?"

"What news? we have heard nothing."

"Don Fernando de Valor has escaped from the city. Yesterday he was here, confined to his own house on parole, and watched by a guard. Last week he was visited by his uncle, the alguazil of Candiar, whom the Moriscos call El Zagar. We have regarded him and Don Fernando as having become thoroughly imbued with Spanish traditions, and weaned from their Moorish breth-

ren. But of late there have been rumours that El Zaguar has been very busy in the mountains, especially in the region of Beznar. Last week, as I say, he visited his nephew, and was closeted with him a great while. Last night the young man vanished from the house, and is certainly no longer in Granada. Strict search and inquiry have been made, and evidence seems to point to his flight to Beznar, where the clan of Valor, his Christianized family connections, dwell in some force. He has got away to them—that is plain.”

“And you think there is danger in that?”

“We must not forget that Don Fernando and his uncle are both of the race and lineage of the great Humeya family—a race of kings. Every insurrection wants its leader, and who so likely to appeal to the ardent imaginations of the Moriscos as one like Don Fernando—handsome, persuasive, strong of body, ambitious of soul, descended from the khalifs of Cordova, the blood of kings in his veins? Why should he flee away from Granada, where, in spite of the irregularities of his life and his temporary captivity, he has been promoted to honour, and holds the place of one of the Veintiquatro? He was not in prison; he was subjected to no hardships. Why did he make this sudden flight? What could be the motive?”

Before answer could be made, if indeed any were forthcoming, the door into an inner apartment opened, and Don Rodrigo and his wife came forward. They had heard that Don Garcia had come and asked for them, and he now quickly repeated his news to the master of the house.

"I am sorry to hear this," spoke Don Rodrigo gravely. "It may not mean anything beyond a foolish act of insubordination and impatience on the part of this youth, who has always shown himself reckless and defiant. But, on the other hand, it may point to the existence of some conspiracy, some projected rebellion which he wishes to join. I have long feared that the so-called Christianity of the De Valors, both uncle and nephew, is but skin-deep. Let it come to blows, and they would prove themselves Morisco to the backbone."

"Is there any alarm in the city?" asked Doña Magdalena, who stood with clasped hands and earnest eyes close beside Yolante.

"They say that the captain-general knows, and that he will double the guards in the Albaycin for the next week, as, indeed, he might in any case have done at this time. But the city seems quiet enough. I myself, with Marmol, have just made a tour of the Albaycin, and we met Father Albotodo there, and had speech of him. He says that he notes no excitement amongst the people, save a few of those immediate friends and followers of Aben Farax who for the whole of the past year have shown themselves very sullen and inimical towards the Christians and towards the Father himself. He has great patience, and has sought only by gentle methods to win back some measure of their confidence. Unluckily for him, there is that apothecary Romero, dwelling in the Albaycin hard by the tower of Aceytuno, who is a familiar of the Inquisition, and he has given information which has led of late to the sudden

arrest by the alguazils of the Holy Office of three servants and workmen of Aben Farax. This has greatly incensed the others, and the Father is grieved himself. Aben Farax, he fears, is nourishing some blind purpose of hatred and vengeance; but for the rest, he thinks that they desire peace rather than war."

"Within the city, I myself think that true," said Don Rodrigo; "but what things are like without, amid the fastnesses and valleys of the Alpuxarras, I know not—time alone can show. But I dislike it that Don Fernando should have disappeared thus. And El Zaguar is well known as a man of courage and resource."

Nevertheless all went quietly in the city, and Christmas Day arrived without disturbance. The streets were full of a merry crowd of holiday-makers, all streaming to the cathedral and churches to Mass, exchanging greetings, decorating themselves with their best gala robes, and delighting in the brilliant sunshine which shone down with dazzling splendour on the beautiful city, and caused them almost to forget the coldness of the wind, and the snow which lay in the crevices and on all the northern slopes of their hills. There were Moriscos abroad, too, walking freely in all parts of the city, showing themselves without fear in their flowing robes, albeit so soon those robes would be proscribed.

The splendid cathedral was filled from end to end with devout worshippers from every class and quarter. Yolante, though only beginning to get used to the unfamiliar order of the Mass, and often longing for the simpler form of wor-

ship to which she had been used at home, could not but be struck by the majesty of all she saw that day. Doña Magdalena had taken pains to explain to her the structure of the service of the Mass, and to show her that when stripped of some of its additions, and its invocations to the Virgin, it was a service of worship and praise and devotion in which all Christians could join; and the girl, to her surprise, found that numbers of the prayers were substantially the same as those used in the English churches, though the order was different; whilst the Latin tongue, and the inaudible voice of the priest, and the perpetual movings to and fro, and incensing, and genuflections disguised the true beauty and dignity of the office. Still she was learning to enter into its worship, and to understand in fuller measure the thought of the one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church to which all Christian men belonged, by right of their faith in Christ and their baptism into the one Body.

To-day her whole soul rose in one great yearning prayer after unity and peace. The very disquiet she felt rather than saw about her had its effect upon her prayers. It seemed so infinitely sad that men bound together by so many ties of friendship and kinship should be ready to fly at one another's throats. But if Christian believers, devout men and good (up to a certain standard at least), could hate and persecute one another as bitterly as the adherents of Rome and the Protestant party did, was it strange that the followers of Allah should scorn and deride them, and refuse to believe in a faith which was all in strife and confusion itself? She was puzzling over that

lack of unity which from the beginning has sapped away and undermined the strength of the Church; and as she thus mused and thus prayed, she was lost to all sense of outward things, and was only roused by a touch upon her arm. Eudo was beside her, his face pale and anxious. She saw also that others of their party were on their feet, and that Doña Magdalena was looking troubled and anxious, and Juanita pale and frightened.

"I think we had better be going," spoke Eudo, in a whisper. "I fear me something has happened. Messengers have been stealing in, and whispering to one and another. The captain-general left the cathedral some while since, and our uncle and several other members of the Veintiquatro have been called away. We can hear that in the streets some sort of tumult is taking place. Don Garcia and Don Pedro and Don Luis de Marmol have come over to us, offering to help us to see the ladies of our party safely home. That something is afoot we cannot doubt. See, there is scarcely one member of the Veintiquatro in his place."

Yolante glanced upwards towards the seats where the twenty-four municipal magistrates of Granada usually sat at High Mass, and she saw that instead of being full as at the beginning of the service, they were almost empty. Also the Marquis of Mondejar and the Count of Tendilla had disappeared, as also had the president of the Chancery, Don Diego Deza, another notable official of Granada, and one who always took very harsh views wherever the Moors were concerned.

Plainly something was afoot, and some danger menaced;

and the congregation was taking the alarm, and melting rapidly away. Yolante took the arm of Don Garcia which was tendered her, and Antonio supported his step-mother, while several gentlemen known to them formed a bodyguard round the ladies, as they moved to one of the side doors and so out into the streets.

Here it was plain that there was stir and excitement. The Moriscos were hurrying back to the Albaycin with immovable faces, as though only desirous to feel themselves within their own quarter again. Sometimes they were hooted as they passed by, and a hand would be raised with threatening gesture, but no blow was struck. And it was plain that the authorities of the city were alive to some possible peril: for already the guard of soldiers from the Alhambra were seen marching through the streets, more numerous than usual; and the patrols kept a sharp lookout upon Moors and Christians alike, and put down with a stern hand any attempt on the part of a Spaniard to hiss or hoot at a Morisco.

"What has happened?" cried Don Garcia to a friend whom he encountered as they turned into the wider thoroughfare of the Carrera de Xenil. This caballero was Don Francisco de Molina, and was one of the officers in the army, and had quarters in the Alhambra. To-day he was off duty, and only in semi-military dress; but his face showed that he knew what it was that was so stirring the minds of the populace, and at the sound of Don Garcia's voice he stopped, and bowed low to the lady, standing uncovered as he made answer.

"Bad news has come in both from Uxixar and Cadiar," he answered; "and it may mean the beginning of serious trouble, for the two outrages took place simultaneously, as though by preconcerted plan. At Uxixar, the alguazils, whose duty it is to collect the king's taxes at this season, and who, I doubt not, seek also to enrich themselves at the expense of the people, were suddenly set upon and slaughtered to a man; whilst at Cadiar, a band of fifty soldiers under one of our brave knights of Santiago, dispatched into the Alpuxarras to keep order, and billeted upon the inhabitants of the place, were murdered at midnight, one and all, by the very persons in whose houses they were entertained."

"Then it has come!" spoke Don Garcia, in a low voice.

"That yet remains to be proved, but it gives us cause for fear. If it had been one outrage only, I would have hoped it accidental; but the two, almost at the same time, look suspicious. We must be prepared for bad tidings, but we need not anticipate the worst. Granada, at least, is quiet still. We have patrolled the Albaycin well, and there is no sign of stir there. Ah! here comes one who may give us news of that. Here are Ben Abner and his beautiful daughter coming from Mass. Have they heard the news yet, I wonder?"

They turned to see the fine old man approach with his daughter on his arm. Don Francisco addressed him by that Spanish name he had assumed at baptism, and which in his case had dropped almost into desuetude, but by which he was known to some in the city. If the edicts

were to be enforced rigidly, all citizens would thenceforth bear their Spanish names alone.

"*Buenos dias*, Señor Vivar! have you yet heard the news?"

"Señor, I have; and deeply, too, I grieve over it. *Ay de mi!* if this goes on there will be lamentation and mourning and woe throughout this fair region and kingdom of Granada."

"You fear a general rising?" asked Don Garcia quickly; and as he spoke, Antonio, who had met his father hurrying to the cathedral in search of them, and had given Doña Magdalena and Juanita into their charge, now came hastening back to see what detained Yolante, and found her speaking with Esther, both faces grave and pale.

"We need not yet believe the worst," he said eagerly; "in all mixed populations troubles and outrages take place.—Doña Esther, let not your eyes look so sad. The flame of war may yet be quenched. Granada is quiet; all men say that. You live in the Albaycin; surely you would know were aught astir."

"I know not that, señor. I fear much may go on there unseen and unknown. God in His mercy be with all helpless, hapless Christians, if indeed the Moriscos rise against them! for then will they be without mercy."

"Does that mean that if the Albaycin rise you will be in peril yourself?" asked Antonio, with sudden breathlessness.

"Nay, señor, it was not of myself I thought," answered

Esther, with gentle dignity, "but of the men and women and children of the Alpuxarras. Here in Granada the Christians are three to one. But over yonder, in many and many a town and village, the Christians are but a handful set in the midst of those who as friends are quiet and kindly enough, but as foes are more cruel and terrible than perchance you do know."

"But if ever you are in peril," persisted Antonio, "remember, lady, that there is ever an asylum for you and yours in the Casa de Aguilar. Its portals will ever be open night and day. Promise me that you will never forget that, señorita; promise me at least so much, and I shall rest the more content."

"*Muchisima gracia*, señor, I will not forget," answered Esther, with the gentle dignity of manner which characterized her. "Yet it is not for ourselves I fear, but for others—for others!"

They could not linger longer in the streets, which were rapidly becoming thronged. Antonio insisted upon accompanying Esther and her father back to the limits of the Albaycin, lest the robes of the latter should draw upon him insult or outrage. Don Garcia and Eudo walked with Yolante to the Casa de Aguilar, and left her there, but they themselves could not keep away from the excitement of the outer world. All the city was seething in fear and dismay. Soldiers from adjacent places were hastening in to increase the guard of the Alhambra and learn what Granada was doing, and all that day rumours kept flying to and fro of insurrection in the Alpuxarras; yet it was

impossible to be sure whether any new disaster had taken place, or whether it was only fresh details that had come regarding the two outrages already known to have occurred.

The day following was like Christmas Day, only that there seemed more reason to fear that the rising would become general. A dozen picked horsemen, headed by Don Francisco de Molina, had set forth at night in the direction of Orgiba, to learn what they might as to what was happening in that place; and he returned at noon on the following day, to report that there was no possibility of a handful of men forcing their way any distance through the passes of the Alpuxarras: the whole Morisco population was in arms, and help must be wanted sorely by every village and town in the district, since not one had a garrison sufficient for its defence in such an emergency, unless possibly Orgiba.

All Granada was in commotion; for this thing, though feared, had scarcely been believed in, and had certainly not been prepared for as thoroughly as prudence demanded. The king was persistent in issuing unjust and tyrannous decrees, but slow in sending such help as would be needful for enforcing them. The captain-general had made many appeals for more troops, both at Granada and throughout the district which would be so greatly affected by the enforcement of the edicts, but very little response had been made; and now he knew that, in this moment of peril, it was not upon the king he must depend, but upon the generosity, the zeal, the chivalry of the knights and nobles of Spain, who would fly to the help of their perse-

cuted Christian brethren when once the Moriscos had risen against them, but who could not be appealed to before.

Don Garcia was one of those who could not be idle at such a crisis as this. Granada might be safe, but this was not yet so certain. In the Albaycin were ten thousand Moriscos, bound to their brethren by far closer ties of faith and sympathy than those artificial bonds which had been imposed by submission and uniformity. The young nobles knew something of the strength of the tie which the infidels felt amongst a Christian population. What would be the effect in the Albaycin when it was known that the Moors were in revolt? The governor of the city might need to walk warily—avoid giving cause for discontent, and only double the guard which watched over the Albaycin from one of its many towers, or set a few extra patrols in the streets. But there were some who felt that a watch should be kept upon that quarter of the city; and as the shades of night fell and deepened upon Granada, there met in the quarters of Don Garcia a few chosen comrades, amongst whom were Antonio and Eudo, resolved to act on their own initiative, and to spend the night in the Moorish quarter.

“Boy, are you strong enough for such a vigil?” asked Don Garcia of Eudo; “for the night is bitter cold, and the snow falls fast. We shall have to face the icy blast and the driving icicles, and methinks the cold of Granada can be more piercing than that of your northern climes; and it was from such that you fled not so many months ago.”

“But I am strong now,” answered Eudo; “I fear no

snow or cold. I am clad to resist the elements, and I must needs accustom myself to hardship, since ere long we shall be taking the field. Let me at least prove what I can do, by keeping this vigil. If I am overcome by cold or fatigue, I can quickly find my way home; but I trow I shall hold out to the end. I am strong now, and I have spent many a cold winter's night ere this tracking game or watching for water-fowl on snow-clad hills or lonely meres away in England."

So they let him have his way, being well pleased by the spirit of the boy; and they divided into two parties, to avoid exciting suspicion. Antonio, Eudo, and Don Garcia kept together; whilst Don Pedro, Don Luis, and Don Francisco formed a second contingent. Each party had its own allotted beat assigned it, and was resolved to keep watch and ward, and without openly declaring themselves even should there be cause for suspicion and alarm, make sure what was happening there whilst Granada was wrapped in sleep.

It was midnight ere they set forth, and the snow lay deep in the narrow streets, muffling their footsteps; and within the Albaycin all seemed to be sleeping. Yet as Antonio's men pursued their way through the silent streets, they became aware of some sort of tumult in the direction of the Alcazaba gate, and pressing along cautiously but rapidly, they soon became eyewitnesses of a strange and impressive spectacle.

On an eminence hard by this gate stood a man in the red fez and white turban of a Turk, surrounded by about

a hundred and fifty men habited in the same dress—that of the Turks as distinguished from the Moors. Yet as the tones of this man's loud voice fell upon their ears, Don Garcia exclaimed beneath his breath,—

“That is Aben Farax the dyer; I have heard him before.”

Round the base of the hill were a number of Moors, standing silent and sullen, listening to the fiery words which poured from this man's lips. Some of his phrases were borne to the ears of the young men, who were creeping slowly nearer and nearer.

“The Alpuxarras is rising to a man! Soon they will leave not one Christian alive. The hated tyrants and dogs of unbelievers will be swept from off the face of the earth! The Moors will sweep over the land as they swept before, conquering and carrying all before them. But Granada must rise! Granada must be the head and centre. All the Albaycin must rise and overwhelm the sleeping city and take possession of it. He had come—he, Aben Farax of the ancient line of the Abencerrages. He had brought with him a band of faithful followers ready to help their brethren—”

But here he was interrupted by groans and hisses and taunting words.

“You did swear to come with eight thousand armed warriors, and here you appear with scarce more than a hundred! What can a handful do against the thousands of Christian knights and nobles, against the armed soldiers of the Alhambra, ready to turn out against us at the first

note of warning? Nay, Aben Farax, we put not our neck into that noose. Go you, and return with your eight thousand, and we will think of it; but what can that hundred do? You have deceived us. We follow not with you. Be gone, for your presence here brings us into danger."

Such was the answer of the Moors, and a hot altercation followed, to which the young men listened with straining ears. But though they well understood the deep resentment of the Moriscos against the edicts, they saw plainly that they would not rise in Granada without a better chance of success. The Moriscos melted away to their own houses, and shut themselves sullenly up within their own thick walls. Aben Farax and his little band were left alone upon the knoll, the man hurling fierce curses at his fellow-countrymen for what he called their cowardice and lack of purpose.

"We must be gone ere morning dawn, my children; but we will not go without striking one blow. See yonder: there is that shop and house of Romero; what does he deserve that betrays his neighbours to the Inquisition? Yonder, again, is the house of the priest; let us raze it to the ground. There is the church, polluted by the hateful worship of Christian dogs; let us fire it, that we may have a beacon to light us home. If we may not take Granada, let us at least leave our mark upon the Albaycin! Follow me! follow me!"

Waving his scimitar wildly in the air, the man sprang downwards, followed by his band, who, however, moved

with wonderful stealthiness, and without shouts or cries. Don Garcia seized his two companions, and drew them hastily into the shelter of a deep embrasure, whilst the strange turbaned figures flitted by.

“Let them do what they will to Romero and his goods; he is an evil man, and needs not our aid. But we must warn Father Albotodo, and fight for him if need be. And the bell from San Salvador shall give alarm. Come, let us take the short cut thither, and seek to reach it ere the foe has come.”

Out they darted, each with his hand upon his weapon, and led by Don Garcia, who knew the Albaycin well, they dashed through narrow entries and crooked streets till they emerged upon the more open space surrounding the church of San Salvador.

“Ha! See there! are we too late?”

Too late, indeed, to save some hapless Spanish soldiers, who had gathered sleepily round a fire they had kindled, and who were lying dead in the blood-stained snow. Some of Aben Farax's followers must have surprised them earlier and done them to death. But they were not too late to peal the alarm bell hanging in the tower of the church, nor were they too late to garrison the house of the good Father Albotodo, who would fain have gone forth to speak to the furious mob of white-turbaned men who surged in the darkness round his doors threatening and cursing.

But those within held him back.

“It is useless; they are mad with lust for blood. The

Alpuxarras has risen. They go to join their companions in guilt. To speak is useless; to adventure yourself amongst them, madness. See, already they are melting away like snow before the sun. They know that that bell will bring soldiers from the Alhambra. They will make good their escape ere these arrive. Yet hark, how they cry upon their brethren to join them! Hark to the sound of cymbal and horn! They have courage, these men! They would fight to the death were they well led and handled in the field. God in His mercy protect the hapless Christians of our towns and villages if such men as these rise and fall upon them!"

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CHAPTER VI.

INSURRECTION.

YOLANTE was awakened from her sleep by the sound of stirring in the house; and almost at once Juanita rushed into her sleeping-chamber, her hair dishevelled and hanging upon her shoulders, her eyes wide with affright.

“The bell, the bell—the bell of San Salvador! Hark, Yolante! can you not hear it? Nay, it has stopped; but it rang clear just now, and all the garrison of the Alhambra will be astir. There is trouble in the Albaycin! that is what it means. Oh, what will become of Antonio? Did he not go thither with Don Garcia this night?”

“Yes, and Eudo with them,” spoke Yolante, her face growing pale with apprehension. “O Juanita, what has happened?”

“I trow the Moriscos have risen,” answered the girl, with chattering teeth. “The Albaycin has arisen, and bloodshed and confusion will follow. Ah! suppose that they triumph—those terrible Moslems—Yolante, Yolante, what would become of us?”

She clung to her companion sobbing and trembling. She knew something of the nature of the Moor when

aroused from the apathy of subjection. She had heard bloodcurdling stories before this. They came back upon her memory like a flood.

"Let us dress and see what is being done," spoke Yolante, who was possessed of that courage which rises in moments of peril. "I hear the clang of arms and the tread of feet. The house is aroused. Doubtless your father will be sallying forth. Let us don our raiment and go and learn what tidings have been brought. Perchance it is not so bad as you fear, Juanita."

The girls were quickly habited, and passed out from their rooms and down into the main court of the house. Already it was filled with armed men, gentlemen of the household, guards, servants—the master of the house himself standing in the midst and giving commands in a quiet and resolute way, his face set and stern, his eyes watchful and alert. Doña Magdalena had issued from her room almost at the same moment as the two girls. She beckoned them towards her, and they stood together upon the stairs, looking down at the muster below, whilst a crowd of terrified women-servants huddled together in the long galleries, weeping and wailing in subdued tones, evidently terrified out of their lives at that which might be coming.

At that moment a loud summons upon the outer gate caused a thrill to pass through the hall, and the porter sprang forward to throw open the doors. Two figures, coated from head to foot with snow, sprang out of the shadows into the glare of the torches, and Yolante uttered a cry of joy and relief,—

“Eudo! it is Eudo!”

“And Antonio!” cried Juanita, with a sob which bespoke the tension of her feeling. “They have escaped! they are safe! But, ah, what news do they bring?”

Antonio, flinging off his snow-encumbered cloak, was already telling the tale.

“The Albaycin has not risen. There has been peril; but the peril, I trust and believe, is past. The captain-general is on his way thither with a guard of men; but he will find all quiet. Aben Farax, who left the city two days since, it is said, returned to-night at the head of a small band of human wolves from the Alpuxarras, to strive to incite the Moriscos of the Albaycin to revolt. Plainly he had promised them a large contingent from without the walls. We heard a part of his address, and the answers he received. He was to have come with eight thousand Turks from the Barbary coast, and with as many mountain allies as he could collect in the Alpuxarras. Methinks the Barbary kinsfolk have again failed them—they are but a broken reed in which to trust—but if what Aben Farax says be truth, the country has risen; and though Granada may be safe for the moment, we must needs strain every nerve on behalf of our brethren and companions in distress. For, once the fire of rebellion be kindled, there will be no mercy shown. Death and rapine and horrors unspeakable must follow. My father, I pray you give me a band of armed men, and let me go forth to fight for our brethren in the faith.”

“Patience, my son, patience,” answered Don Rodrigo;

whilst the eyes of Yolante and Juanita kindled at the appeal, and for a time there was no room for fear in their hearts. "We shall, in sooth, have fighting enough and to spare ere this thing be finished. But what of Aben Farax and his band? Whither have they gone? And is it indeed true that Granada is safe?"

"I trow so, señor. Finding himself unable to rouse the Moriscos, who only came out in small knots to hear him, and quickly returned and barred themselves into their houses, he and his band were filled with a lively disgust. They made a raid towards San Salvador, killed the guard, and would have attacked Father Albotodo, but found his house too strong; and we, who had gone thither to warn him, fired a volley upon them from an upper casement, which sent them hither and thither in dismay. The dawn was just about to break, and we heard them crying aloud: 'To the hills! to the hills! Leave the cowards of Granada to be wiped out by the edicts of the infidel dogs! We go to help our brethren to slay their Christian foes elsewhere. Oh, there will be blood to drink in abundance, and booty in spoil, and fair women and slave children! Let us not waste time here in Granada. Elsewhere a rich banquet of vengeance awaits us!' And so they swept away like a drifting snow-cloud; and we, who had seen thus far, made our way hither as fast as possible, for we knew the bell of San Salvador, which we had made shift to ring, would be spreading its alarm throughout the city."

Dawn was breaking—indeed by this time the light of

day had come—and despite the yet falling snow, there was brightness in the air, and the oppression of the night had passed. But all Granada was stirred to its depths. Soon the city was ringing with the news of what had happened that night in the Albaycin, and it was further declared that a number of Turkish robes and turbans had been found outside a small disused portal which formerly led into the Albaycin, but had been earthed up some years before. Now it was plain that Aben Farax and his band had dug away the earth, and so obtained entrance into the city without disturbing the guards at the gates, and thus had been enabled to make their way in without having aroused alarm. Plainly they had made their exit in the same way, had flung off some of their disguise (for, as later became clear, Aben Farax had arrayed his men so as to look like Turks, that the Moors of Granada might believe that the Barbary pirates and rovers had really come to their assistance), and had melted away into the mountains, whither, in the blinding snowstorm which raged all that day, the Marquess of Mondejar and his soldiers were unable to follow them.

That day nothing save vague rumour reached Granada, but from the day following and onward there poured in the most appalling and horrible tales of massacre and torture from every town and village throughout the district of the Alpuxarras.

The Moriscos had risen in blind and bitter fury, and in all the desperation of a final effort, against the hated Christian foe. They hoped for success, these ignorant

fanatics of the mountains; they had small knowledge of the power of the Spanish monarchy, or of the forces the king could bring into the field in time. They saw that they outnumbered the Christians by ten to one, or more. They were told on all hands that the Christians had banded together to wipe them as a nation from off the face of the land, and they had all too much reason for believing this. Thus it was the fury of despair, as well as of revenge, which actuated them; for if this, their last attempt, should fail, they knew that nothing remained to them but a servitude far more bitter than any which had been theirs heretofore.

Was it altogether strange, then, that the worst passions of their wild nature should be in the ascendant? Was it strange that those who had suffered the horrors of the Inquisition, or whose brethren had perished within its walls, should emulate the cruelties which had been practised upon them? One's blood curdles at the recital of what they inflicted upon their victims, death by cold steel being the most merciful fate ever accorded to any. The Christian population of each place almost invariably fled to the church for safety, as being the strongest building in the vicinity, or to the tower which generally adjoined it. Here they endeavoured, with the courage born of desperation, to hold out against the dreaded foe till they should receive relief from the forces in Granada, which they knew would set out to their rescue upon hearing of their peril. But such towers or buildings were seldom strong enough to resist for long the fierce onslaught of the infuriated

Moriscos, who, if they could not batter in the doors, usually kindled fires at the base, and either drove out the victims by smoke and heat, or left them to perish in the flames. Such as escaped the latter fate often had cause to wish they had stayed to brave it; for, in spite of having lived for generations in peace and amity together beneath the mild rule of Ferdinand and Isabella and the politic tolerance of the Emperor Charles, no sooner was the torch of war kindled than all softer, kindlier feelings seemed instantly extinguished; and the best kindness any Morisco is accredited with having shown a former friend is that by a sharp sword-thrust he saved him from a lingering death.

All Granada was in a turmoil of consternation. Don Rodrigo de Aguilar and others of the leading nobility of the city were in constant conference with the president, Deza, and with the captain-general at the Alhambra. Shops were shut, business was suspended; the very clerks and advocates of the courts appeared with arms at their sides. The citizens enrolled themselves into companies for the defence of their homes and lives; from the arsenals of the Alhambra arms were freely distributed to all who were of an age to bear them and were not possessed of them before. Five hundred stout soldiers were added to the guard of the Alhambra, and kept zealous watch and ward over palace and city; whilst, from the country round, nobles poured in with their contingents of armed followers, eager to be led forth to do battle with the infidel, and to rescue from unspeakable horrors those brethren that still

held out in the scattered fortresses and citadels of the Alpujarras, and those Christian women and children who were held captive by the Moors, to be sold into slavery by the Barbary pirates or distributed amongst their harems.

From all the churches rose the constant sound of weeping and intercession and prayer. Whilst the men armed themselves, and the city militia gathered in open places for martial exercises, the women flocked to the churches, where the archbishop and priests held constant Masses, sometimes to avert the fearful peril which menaced the whole southern portion of the country, sometimes to ask mercy and peace for the souls of those who had perished as "martyrs" at the hands of the infidels.

And, in truth, some of these were martyrs in the strict sense of the term; for there were Moriscos who had embraced Christianity who perished at this time for their faith, refusing to renounce it, and sharing the fate of their teachers and companions. Even children died bravely for their faith, showing singular heroism and fortitude, although up to the time of the rebellion many of these had evinced no very absorbing affection for the creed in which they had been reared.

Small wonder was it, then, that every Christian knight and noble, citizen and ecclesiastic, burned to sally forth to the aid of their suffering brethren. As all far-seeing men had foreseen, the race hatred once kindled blazed to fearful heights. The Moriscos of the Albaycin went in fear of their lives. They dared scarcely show their faces out of their own quarters; and the patrols of soldiers who

walked their streets, and often entered their houses without ceremony, were a constant source of peril. Some angry blow struck by an irritated husband or father—for the soldiers often insisted on penetrating into the women's apartments, under pretence that secret meetings were carried on there—and an indiscriminate massacre might easily follow. The Marquess of Mondejar had promised them protection so long as they remained quiet and inoffensive. But he, whose rule had been on the whole mild and benevolent, was soon to take the field; and though he left his son, the Count of Tendilla, to rule the city in his place, it was whispered already that, since the rising had taken place, the easy tolerance of the young count had changed to a bitter animosity and hostility, and that the Moriscos had little to hope for from him.

At the Casa de Aguilar all was bustle and life. Well-nigh a century before, there had been a Don Alonso de Aguilar who had laid down his life for the cause of the Christians, after performing prodigies of valour against the hordes of the Moors. The legend was enrolled in the stories of Spanish chivalry—how that, after fighting to the last and seeing all his comrades fall around him, he had set his back against the rocks, and though bleeding from seven ghastly wounds, had fought on and on, slaying all who approached, until the mighty Moorish chieftain, El Feri of Ben Estepar, rushed against him with uplifted sword, and still fighting to the very last, Don Alonso yielded up the ghost.

This was the tradition of the house of Aguilar; was it

likely that at such a moment as this any son of that house should hold back from service against the infidel? Don Rodrigo was busily arming every servant and retainer in his employ; his son was equally active putting the men through all martial exercises. Every day which must elapse before the start could be made was like a century. But all knew that it was useless to march in small bodies, with a daring and wily foe to encounter in a perilous country of gorges and torrents, well known to them, but not so to those who marched against them. The captain-general must move with a force of four thousand at least, and all of these must be men well trained to arms, and seasoned against the hardships of a winter campaign.

But if the men of the household must needs go at the call of duty, what of the wife and daughter, the little children, and young English kinswoman left behind in the city? Would the strong walls of the great house and the stout arms of serving-men be protection sufficient in the event of attack? Could they be left there when the men of the family had gone?

It was Don Rodrigo who himself settled that point, a few days before the army marched forth from the city upon the third day of January 1569.

"The Marchioness of Mondejar desires your presence with her at the Alhambra during these days of possible peril," he said, entering the apartment where the ladies of his household were assembled, hard at work upon the few last stitches of a beautiful silken banner, upon which a golden cross had been emblazoned together with the arms of the

Aguilars. "It is her gracious wish to share the privileges of that citadel palace with such of the wives and daughters of the nobility of the city as would wish to avail themselves of such protection. In sooth it will please me right well to leave you there. For though the walls of this house be strong, and the city is guarded by her bands of armed townsmen, and I have small fear that Granada will be beset by any large force from without, yet at such a time as this none can be certain how the tide of war may ebb and flow; and were there to be even short-lived peril, I would gladly feel that my dear ones were safely placed within that stronghold, so closely watched and guarded."

Yolante looked up full of eager interest, while Juanita, who had set her last stitch, sprang up clapping her hands, and Doña Magdalena's face expressed gratitude and relief.

"Ah, but that is a kindly thought, for which I am grateful indeed. My heart did sink at the prospect of bearing your absence alone in this lonely house; though, for the sake of the children and the maidens, I would have sought to be brave. Yet I fear me I am not of the stuff of which heroines are formed. I should have passed my days in anxiety, and my nights in terror. Within the walls of the Alhambra I shall only fear for you, my husband, and for our brave soldiers going forth to battle. For those left beneath my care I shall have no cause to tremble."

"To live within the Alhambra!" spoke Yolante beneath her breath; "amid those wonderful courts and halls and gardens! To look daily upon that glorious prospect which

lies spread before our eyes! It will be like an enchanted life, and free from all peril and danger. Ah! what will they say in England, Eudo, when they hear that we are dwelling within the walls of that fairy palace of the Alhambra?"

"You, not we, Yolante," spoke Eudo, with a smile; "for I shall not share that sojourn with you—at least not at the first."

"Why not, Eudo?" she asked quickly, whilst Juanita drew near with parted lips to listen. "You will not be going forth to fight the foe! Wherefore will you not be with us?"

"I am going forth with the army to be a bearer of tidings," answered Eudo. "If my strength be not enough for the battle, it will serve for lesser matters. I shall ride forth with the army at the first, and return to Granada with news, and with the needful instructions to those who make store of provision as to whither the line of march has tended. For though we believe that Orgiba will be our destination, many things may happen to turn our steps another way. I can act as messenger at least, if I may not yet call myself a soldier."

Yolante gazed at him with anxious eyes.

"But the cold, Eudo, and the hardship and exposure; and you sent forth from England to bask in the hot sunshine of the south, not to expose yourself in mountain fastnesses to arduous marches!"

"Sister, yes; and not for pleasure or distraction would I go, but at the call of the voice of our suffering brethren.

I cannot be altogether deaf to that call. Let me act as messenger, and one more sturdy soldier will be spared to meet the infidel. Every man is needed. Would that we were fourfold as many as we are like to be! We too spring of a soldier race; shall we be found backward when the hour of peril comes?"

Yolante said no more, and Don Rodrigo, who had caught the last words, laid his hand approvingly upon the shoulder of the youth.

"Let him go forth, Yolante. I trow his spirit will bear him through, and that he will win his spurs in the days to come, unless by God's especial grace we quell this insurrection in one campaign. In former years such warfare has been tedious; but the power of Spain waxes stronger, and that of the Moriscos weaker. I would that we had not given cause for the uprising. I fear me that in this matter we are not guiltless; but for the rest, we can no longer hold back. Our foes have arisen. Christian blood is flowing like water. Christian soldiers must go forth, to conquer or to die."

"Then go, Eudo, and may God preserve you!" spoke Yolante, with brightening eyes. "No, I will not seek to hold you back; it is the call of duty."

Whilst this was going on within the walls of the Casa de Aguilar, Antonio was pursuing his way along the narrow streets of the Albaycin, in the direction of the house of Ben Abner; for it was close upon the day when the order for the march must be given, and he desired to say farewell to his old friend and to his beautiful daughter.

Suddenly, as he was turning a corner, he was aware of a sound of shouting and yelling, and he heard distinctly the words,—

“The Christian traitress! Down with all such! She betrayed us before—she, or such as she! She will betray us again. Down with her! down with her! She is only a Morisco’s daughter; the Spaniards will not trouble about her. Shall we, of all the cities of this land, have no baptism of blood for the Christians?”

A hoarse, savage yell was the response. It was in a narrow court that these cries were heard. No Spanish patrol was in sight. Antonio’s hand was upon his sword as he flung himself through the darkening alley. Some instinct or premonition set his heart beating wildly. The next moment he saw Esther Vivar, as she was generally called, standing close against the wall like a stag at bay, her head thrown back, her eyes fixed full upon a ring of furious dusky faces around her, hemming her in on all sides. At her feet lay a huddled heap. Later on Antonio learned that it was the old servant who had attended her upon a mission of mercy to some sick and suffering family in this the lowest quarter of the Albaycin.

“Santiago! Santiago! Santiago!” shouted Antonio, as he dashed forward, making the walls re-echo with the battle-cry of the Spanish soldier. In the darkness and the gloom it was difficult for the baying pack of human hounds to know who might not be upon them. The high walls gave back a volley of echoes, and a yell of terror rose up from the mob.

"The soldiers! the soldiers! Away for your lives!" they shouted; and in a moment the pack had taken to its heels, scudding away in the darkness, like rats when the light of a lantern falls upon them. Esther stood motionless, as she had done before. Her eyes met the ardent, indignant gaze of Antonio, who had driven away the last of the flying foe with blows from the flat of his sword. A savage impulse came over him to run the miscreants through the body, but he restrained it. He had never yet taken human life; though so soon to begin that stern task, and he would not stab a man in the back as he ran.

"Señorita," he cried, standing before her panting and pale with anger and fear, "how come you in such a place and at such an hour alone?"

"I was not alone," answered Esther. "I had Hassan with me—my poor faithful Hassan, who protects me everywhere as I go about the city ministering to the sick and poor and wretched. Never till this night have I suffered molestation. I had thought all the Albaycin my friends."

Her voice trembled and broke, and she bent over the old man, who was quite dead. A door behind was cautiously opened, and a head peered forth.

"Are they gone, lady? *Ay de mi!* What are we coming to? Hassan dead! Ah! that is because he was a Christian, not in name only, but in truth. They hate all such, those bloodthirsty hounds! God send there be not a rising and they slay us all!"

"Why did you not open your doors to the lady when she was attacked, and draw her safe within shelter?"

spoke Don Antonio sternly to the cowering man who looked cautiously forth.

"Ah, señor, I should have had the whole pack upon me; and I have a sick wife and children, and they hate me for a Christian, too," whined the man, who was evidently frightened to death. "But I did not know they had killed Hassan on my doorstep, and were threatening the lady, or I would have put her safely out by some other way."

"Then take the body in now, and let his master know in the morning. Nay, go at once. Tell Ibrahim Ben Abner that his daughter has been attacked in the streets of the city, and that the Albaycin is no place for her. Tell him that I am taking her forthwith to the Casa de Aguilar, and that on the morrow she will accompany the ladies of that house to the palace of the Alhambra, where the Marchioness of Mondejar has offered an asylum to all ladies of gentle birth who find themselves exposed to peril in other parts of the city."

"Señor!" exclaimed Esther, in astonishment.

But Antonio's response was to possess himself of her hand, which he placed on his arm, and forthwith hurried her along, keeping his drawn sword still in his right hand, and his eyes in all directions.

"Yes, señorita," he said, as they emerged at length into a wider thoroughfare, and saw the camp-fire of the Spanish sentries, "in this matter you must let me judge. My father is one of the Veintiquatro, and I am his son. The condition of the city is a charge we cannot lightly neglect. Your presence here is a source of danger. You

are known for a true Christian; your father may be suspected of being more in sympathy with the Spanish than the Morisco cause. Evil influences are at work. A spark may kindle a conflagration. It is not safe for you to be here."

"But, señor—"

"Wait, Doña Esther; I have not done yet. Let me say this much also: I must go forth with the army which will leave Granada shortly—within three days, they say. Men, ere they go forth to battle, must needs make provision at home for those they love best. How could I fight as a true knight should, were my heart distracted by fears for your fate? I should picture ten thousand fearful things. I might become a coward through my fears. Let me but place you in safety with my mother, my sisters, and I go forth with a mind at ease. I know that in this I shall have the approval and sanction of your father, whom I will seek at once when I have conducted you home. Doña Esther, will it content you if I promise that should he approve not my plan, I take you back to his house upon the morrow?"

She turned her face towards him with a smile which made his heart bound within him.

"In sooth I think it must, señor, for I feel that you are bent upon your own way; and I think I owe my life to you this night."

He caught her hand suddenly and pressed it to his lips.

"I must needs have my way, Doña Esther," he replied, in a whisper she scarce heard, "because I love you, I love you!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE ALHAMBRA.

“**T**O the Alhambra! You will never let her go there!”

Don Manuel de Solis was the speaker; he stood before Ben Abner with flashing eyes and a face working with passion. There was something in his aspect which betokened a severe mental tension. Don Miguel stood beside him, listening intently to what passed. Some subtle change had passed over both brothers during the past weeks, though it would not be easy to define what that change was.

“Why should I not let her go?” questioned Ben Abner calmly. “She will be safe there, and happy with those who share fully and ardently her own faith. In the Albaycin, it has been proved, she is not safe. But for the timely appearance of Don Antonio de Aguilar she might have lost her life, and an uproar in the city have resulted therefrom, as well as stern reprisal. I am thankful that she should be safe from all such attacks. I have consented with gratitude to the offer of the Doña Magdalena.”

“But I do not consent!” cried Don Manuel, with flashing eyes; “and I have a right to a voice in this matter.

Have you not pledged your word that she shall be mine? Is she not already as good as my betrothed wife?"

"Nay, nay, my young friend, you go too far," answered the old man calmly. "I have indeed given you my permission to woo her in marriage after the Western fashion, and you have come to and fro at my house and sought her favour. But ever have I told you that I use no compulsion, nor even any great persuasion, in the matter. The happiness of my child is more to me than any other thing on earth. From her own lips you must win your answer. I do not give away my daughter's hand without her own consent."

"But you send her away to live in a palace surrounded by all the flower of Spanish chivalry. She will be won away by some dog of a Christian, and she will be lost to me."

"She will be lost, indeed, to you, Don Manuel, if you speak thus of those of her own faith, and that faith which you have hitherto professed to hold. Remember that Esther is not Christian only in name, like so many, but her whole heart is with the faith she professes. If you elect to cast in your lot with your kinsmen of the Moslem faith, Esther will be lost to you for ever."

The other bit his lip as though to hold back a torrent of words. His face worked strangely; it was pale with passion. Ben Abner, who had known these brothers all their lives, and had called their father one of his best friends, was sincerely sorry for them. He understood how, at such a time as this, the struggle which beset them must

be very sore. Spaniard and Christian by training and habit, they were, nevertheless, at heart Moors and Moslems. Mohammed was far more to them than Christ; the one was real, the other a myth. Of late they had been consorting more and more with their friends in the Albaycin; sympathy with the Morisco cause was rising ever higher and higher within them. At the tales of horror which were confounding Granada, and plunging in shuddering gloom the Spanish portion of the city, their hearts seemed to glow with a strange sense of triumph and savage joy. They had not yet openly embraced the rebel side. Granada was quiet, and they remained within her walls, waiting and watching, halting between two opinions. But slowly and steadily the tide was setting one way, and Ben Abner knew it, if they did not know it themselves, and he grieved over it in secret; for though sad at heart for the wrongs and injustice done to the Moriscos by the stern decrees of the king, he could not desire that they should come out victorious in the struggle, or that Spain should become again subject to the Moor.

But seeing how it was with Don Manuel, he spoke words calculated to set at rest some of his anxieties.

“You need not fear that within the walls of the Alhambra she will be surrounded by Christian knights and gentlemen. It is because all these are going forth to the wars that an asylum is needed for the wives and daughters, who will be left otherwise unguarded in their homes. Esther will be surrounded only by maidens, matrons, and children. And these days will be too stern for dalliance

and love-making. Your heart can be at rest on that point, my young friend; nevertheless, I would not have you set your hopes too high, for Esther will wed with none who shares not in heart, and not only with the lips, that faith which is all in all to her."

The brothers went forth into the street again arm in arm. The face of Don Manuel was dark and gloomy.

"I will have her yet," he muttered fiercely, "I will have her yet! I have loved her from her childhood and mine. She shall not wed another. Sooner would I plunge a knife into her heart! I will have her yet! Before Allah I vow it!"

He lifted his hand and shook it high above his head. Don Miguel gazed at him a moment fixedly, and then spoke with slow deliberation, which betokened quite as much resolution and purpose as his brother's ardent words.

"We will work together, Murad; we have both our object to gain. We each love a Christian maiden; we are each resolved to win that maiden for ourselves. What is the Christian creed to us? A garment that we can assume or doff at pleasure. Have we not deceived the Spaniards all these years? Can we not deceive them yet a little longer? The time has not yet come for Granada to rise; we can wear the mask for a brief while more. The Christian knights sally forth upon the morrow. What will hinder us from paying our respects to the ladies within the walls of the Alhambra? Are we not Spanish caballero enough for that? I trow we can make the most of such opportunity as will now be ours. If we do not

win our way by gentle methods, we can think later of other ones."

"Hassan, of what are you thinking?"

It was significant of these brothers that when alone they almost invariably used their Moorish names rather than those which had been bestowed in Christian baptism, and by which they were known in the city of Granada. Few ever heard them speak to each other thus, but when alone they seldom used the Spanish name.

"*Carracho!* that is quickly told. Murad, do you think this revolt will be speedily quelled? I tell you no. It will spread like a fire throughout the Alpuxarras, where, amid the mountain fastnesses, the Moor will hold out for years against the Christian foe. Oh, we shall see great things! I know it. And even though the trouble come not near Granada, nor enter within the city, where men have lived too much at ease these many years to wish to see changes now, yet our brethren of the mountains will be astir and alive, and will help in any scheme that we may set afoot."

"What mean you, Hassan?" asked Don Manuel once again.

"I mean that in times like these it is not only men that vanish, swept off as prisoners to mountain fastnesses. Women and children have been likewise spirited away. And when such fate befalls a high-born Christian maid, would not any deliverer coming to her aid be received with open arms, however cool she had shown herself before?"

"Ha! I begin to understand. But, Hassan, which is it—who is it—with you? Not Esther, I know."

"Nay; she has ever been for you, Murad. We are brothers, but not rivals. Fear not that. It is the eyes of the yellow-haired English maiden that have pierced my heart, and I see the hand of fortune working in this thing—that they be thrown together thus in the Alhambra Palace. Friends they are already; they will grow to be as sisters. Then will our task be the easier, since the habit of companionship will grow upon them, and to seize one will be to seize both."

"But you will not have them hurt?"

"Not for the world! We will take measure against that. Nay, if we disguise ourselves with skill and care, we may even be of the company which will swoop down some day from the hills and carry away our captives. But later shall we come to their rescue, as though at risk of our own lives; and then, in the fear of what might happen to them undefended in the hands of the foe, they must needs promise us our reward; and I know that their word, once plighted, will be kept. And when we have won the hand, surely we can win the heart. Love begets love, as all men know; and the Moorish blood so hot within us knows a depth of love which no dog of a Christian lover ever yet felt towards the lady of his heart."

"But when will such a plan be carried out?" asked Manuel eagerly, his heart hot within him.

"Ah! that no man can yet say. Belike we may have

to wait. For not till the days of summer would such a matter be possible ; and it must not be hastily or lightly undertaken. But with such a hope in our hearts we may be patient. We shall not have to wait for ever ; of that I am sure."

* * * * *

Meantime, the household of Don Rodrigo Hernandez de Aguilar was all astir—the men making their final preparations for the start upon the morrow, the ladies for the fitting to the Alhambra Palace, which filled many of them with so much expectancy and wonder. They were not the only high-born ladies who had availed themselves of the offer of the captain-general in the name of his wife. Several noble families were wending their way thither, and already the magnificent palace of Charles the Fifth, where the marquess and his family resided, was filled by those whose claims had come first. But Doña Magdalena and her family had little to complain of in the quarters assigned to them in the old Moorish palace ; for although from without it was dwarfed by the proportions of the modern building, within it was a marvel of beauty, a dream of delight.

Esther had scarce set foot within the courts of the Alhambra. Once, as a child, her father had taken her thither, but since that time she had never entered its marble halls and endless galleries and colonnades. Arm in arm with Yolante—who, though she had visited the Marchioness de Mondejar in the great modern palace, had never been into the old Moorish edifice adjoining—she

passed through the Court of the Lions and into the exquisite suite of apartments which once had formed the winter residence of the Sultana and royal family. The Sala de las Dos Hermanas, the Sala de las Ajimeces, together with all the small apartments opening from them, were given over to the family of Don Rodrigo and their servants. Perhaps nothing in all the Alhambra is more wonderful and beautiful than these rooms and courts. The lace-work of the walls, the glowing colours of the arabesques, the perspective of graceful pillars, domes, stalactite pendants, and honeycomb vaulting, all combined to form a picture which the girls could not sufficiently admire. Nor were they confined to their own beautiful quarters, but were free to ramble through the endless courts and gardens of the wonderful old palace, which was now far less thought of than the great king's palace for which some of it had been sacrificed.

But to Esther and Yolante nothing could come up to the wonders of the ancient artificers. They were never weary of walking through the courts and colonnades, asking questions of all who knew the history of the ancient palace, and sighing sometimes in pity for the race that had wrought these wonders, only to see them taken possession of by their hated traditional foe.

Yet at first nothing could be thought of but the partings that were so nigh at hand. Doña Magdalena's face was pale, and her eyes were heavy; and Juanita's damask cheek had lost something of its bloom. For almost all the gallant knights and gentlemen of her acquaintance

were going forth to the war, as well as father and brother, and every day tales of fresh horror, fresh insurrection, came pouring into the city, and all knew what perils must lie before the soldiers of the Cross ere they could hope to subdue the insurgent masses. Tales were ever flying about that Barbary rovers were landing in thousands to the aid of their brethren of the faith, that the Sultan of Turkey and the Mohammedan ruler in Morocco were gathering forces together with the same object; and if these stories proved to be true, the Christian forces would find themselves sorely beset.

Yet there was an immense response throughout Spain. In the east the redoubtable Marquess de los Velez—"the Devil's Iron Head," as the Moors had before this learned to call him—was gathering together an army, and was almost ready to cross the frontier from Murcia without waiting for orders, prompted only by his own burning resolve to assist in the cause.

This news caused rejoicings in Granada, but the Marquess of Mondejar himself looked a little grave.

"He is a hero in the field, but his temper is harsh and cruel. I still hope to bring the rebels to submission by a series of quick blows, and then by mild and conciliatory methods; for to drive away the Moors will be the ruin of Southern Spain. But I fear me Los Velez will teach with fire and sword, whip and scorpion alone. And then farewell to any thought of peace. It will be war to the bitter end."

"And that is what it must come to, señor, my father,"

spoke the Count of Tendilla, who a few months back was reckoned as a good friend to the Moriscos. But his tolerant liking for them had been changed by the news of the past events into a bitter hatred, and the marquis was sometimes a little uneasy at having no one else to leave in his place as governor of Granada during his absence. He tried to speak counselling moderation to the hot-headed young count, but Tendilla received them with looks of doubt and negation.

“I will act as shall seem to me most wise for the safety of the city,” he said, “but I can fetter myself by no promises. In times like these stringent measures may be needful. Justice to Christians must come before mercy to infidels. They have made their bed; let them lie upon it!”

It was a stirring sight upon the morrow to see the gathering of gallant soldiers—armed and accoutred, with glittering weapons, inlaid breastplates, shining head-pieces, and fluttering scarves, often the work of those gentle maidens who loved them best—start forth, to the waving of pennons and the blare of trumpets, towards the various gates from which exit was to be made.

The farewells had been made the previous night. Tears had been shed in plenty then. Even the heroic Marchioness of Mondejar had broken down and wept awhile; and indeed she had cause, for five of her six sons rode forth with their father, even to the youthful Don Carlos, who was but a lad of thirteen summers, yet could not be held back from accompanying the army, and was destined, like

more than one of his elder brothers, to win himself laurels for gallantry and daring in moments of peril.

Antonio had come, with several comrades in arms, including Don Garcia, to say adieu to his mother and sisters in their new quarters; and Don Garcia had stood with Yolante looking over the noble prospect with eyes that concerned themselves less with external beauties than with the girl's fair face, and suddenly he said,—

“Doña Yolante, we are like crusaders going forth to battle. Not only do we mailed warriors ride forth in serried ranks, but our ranks are swelled by monks and priests, who with sword and crucifix march with us, not only to render aid and administer the rites of our faith to the sick and wounded and dying, but themselves to strike a blow at the infidel upon the field of battle.”

“So I have heard,” answered Yolante: “Father Christoval and Father Gregory were both here this morning to make their farewells. A goodly band, they say, of monks and friars are marching forth to avenge the cruel death of those monks of Guecija who were so barbarously murdered in that caldron of boiling oil. Father Albotodo stays within the city amongst his own flock in the Albaycin, where he is much needed. Pray Heaven they do not fall upon him and treat him in some such fearful manner!”

“I trust and hope that Granada will be safe. At least we leave a garrison within the Alhambra sufficient to maintain order, and the citizens are armed to a man, and banded together for the defence of the inhabitants. I trust, indeed, that all will here be well, else I ride not

forth with so light a heart to do the behest of my country."

His bright eyes were upon her face; he was wearing a part of his suit of mail—the peascod breastplate and backplate of the day, which imitated in richly-embossed and shining metal the doublet of the civilian—and his jewelled sword-hilt flashed with every movement. Yolante thought she had never seen a knightlier figure, and she looked back at him with glowing eyes.

"Señor, I would that I too could strike a blow for the liberation of Christian captives in Moorish hands, and the avenging of their fearful sufferings. I have grieved for the Moriscos up till now, but I cannot pity them as I did. Nothing can condone such savage ferocity. Ah! why can a girl do nothing at such a time as this?"

"Nothing! Ah, señorita, how little you understand!"

Her eyes were wide with wonder; he spoke again, with a new ring in his voice.

"Doña Yolante, when knights of old rode forth to fight the infidel, they carried each in his helmet the token given him by the fair hand of some sweet lady. That token nerved his spirit and strengthened his arm, and for her sake, to do her honour, he achieved prodigies of valour; her image was ever before him, and even in death—if it came to him—he held her token in his hand, and it comforted him in all suffering and trial. Sweet lady, I am well-nigh alone in the world. I have no mother to give me a blessing, no sister to work a scarf or kerchief for me. I have no gage of love from any fair hand to wear as my

badge. Doña Yolante, am I overbold in the hope I have cherished? From day to day I have sought to speak, and have not found the courage. Now I am going, it is my last chance. Will you give me some token to carry with me? I ask not a gage of love—that were too bold a request—but a pledge of friendship, of good will; a token that there is one who will think of me sometimes, and remember me in her prayers.”

He had spoken, and now stood looking down upon her, a great light shining in his eyes. Yolante lifted hers to his face with a frank trustfulness, and then the crimson blood rushed upwards to her very brow. Her fingers trembled somewhat as she unfastened a knot of ribbon and lace which she wore at her throat. She held it out to him with a shy sweetness, very different from the arch coquettish witchery of a Spanish maiden.

“Señor Don Garcia, I should be proud to think of so noble a knight as a friend. I will, in sooth, pray night and morning for your preservation and safety, and welcome you back to Granada, when the time comes, with gladness of heart.”

He took her hand and carried it to his lips. The compact was sealed between them, though perhaps neither of them knew quite what had that day been done.

Antonio came up quickly to make his adieus to the cousin whom he had come to regard almost as a second sister, and one with more force of character than the merry Juanita.

“You will take care of her—of my Esther!” he pleaded.

“I dare call her that to you, since you have read my secret; but of her I have asked nothing—I trow she must know. I betrayed myself that night when she might have met her death in the Albaycin, but since then no word has passed my lips. Yet I can be happy since she is here with Doña Magdalena, and with you. Let her be as a sister. She loves you, and you love her. You will guard and cherish one another until your knights and rightful protectors come back to claim you.”

That was yesterday, and now they stood to watch the gallant cavalcade ride forth. Tears stood in many bright eyes, but all were brave enough to smile and to wave adieus without losing control of those pent-up feelings which later must have a vent.

Don Garcia's was one of the most notable figures. He seemed to be clad in silver, and the milk-white steed he rode carried him bravely. In his head-piece, the vizor of which was raised, he carried a knot of lace and ribbon, and a pennant of ribbon of the same colours fluttered on his lance.

Thus, amid the plaudits of the people, the sound of music, and the shouts of the eager soldiers themselves, the marquess and his chosen company marched out of the Elvira gate; and the crowd which had assembled to see them go, and cheer them to the last with hopes of victory and speedy return, slowly broke up and dispersed, some sad at heart, all anxious and beset by fears for some near or dear one, but resolved to show a courageous face, and not to hamper the young governor by any panic of un-

reasonable fear at being left in the city with a diminished force.

Within the walls of the Alhambra the days passed peacefully enough, despite the tramp of the guards and the challenge of the sentries in the grim fortress of the Alcazaba, rearing its head above them, and seeming to guard and dominate the whole Alhambra. For all who were timid, it was peace and relief to feel themselves within the precincts of this well-guarded and commanding place. Doña Magdalena, in spite of her anxieties for her husband, began to look less careworn and anxious than she had done of late. She was no longer fearful of some peril menacing the children whenever they were out of sight, and she would sit for hours in one of the beautiful courts of the Moorish palace, telling Yolante of her past life, and listening to the girl's stories of England and English life with a gaze of curious, wistful longing. Esther, too, was never weary of listening to such tales as these; and to Yolante it was a delight to speak of her old home, of the freedom and peace of England under the rule of "good Queen Bess," and of the breezy life she and her sisters and brothers had led in the moorland wilds surrounding their Devonshire home.

"It must be so beautiful a thing to live at peace with all men—to be one nation, with one beloved sovereign, bound together by so many tender ties!" spoke Esther musingly. "Here it is all so different! Not only is there the endless strife betwixt Morisco and Christian, but Spain itself, though united now beneath one sovereign,

is split up into hostile factions. There are bitter jealousies yet between the nobles of Castile, of Aragon, of Murcia. Old feuds linger, and die hard. *Ay de mi!* It is different in your seagirt isle, though it may be set amid fogs and tempests—”

“Nay, not always. We have months of sunshine in summer, and our cold is not more bitter than yours here in Granada, albeit you have more hot sunshine to temper it by day. When I go back, let me take you with me, Esther. I should love to show you all of which we talk together, and that you should understand more of that freer Christian faith which we enjoy there without fear from priest or Inquisition.”

The visitors who most often came to see the ladies resident in the Alhambra were Don Miguel and Don Manuel de Solis. They had gone for one day's ride with the army, and they were the best scouts in all the city, picking up items of news earlier than any one else—no one knew quite how they obtained it—and bringing it straight to Count Tendilla in the Alhambra, where soon they were permitted to come and go almost unchallenged.

It was these brothers who brought the earliest news of the doings of the army, and told how already the monks and priests had shown that they could fight with the best of the soldiers.

They brought the news of how the advance-guard had been well-nigh driven back at the outset by a well-placed ambuscade of Moriscos, and how defeat had been averted.

only by the heroic bravery of eight monks, Franciscans and Jesuits, who flung themselves with such fury upon the foe that the soldiers plucked up courage and drove them back to their mountain fastnesses.

And another day they came with a somewhat similar tale.

“Do you know the great ravine of the Tablate, ladies, on the road between Durcal and Orgiba? It is a hundred feet deep, and a roaring torrent thunders through it; and it is spanned by a stout bridge, or has been until now. But the Moriscos had destroyed the bridge, posting themselves upon the farther bank, and all that was left was a few rough timbers hanging swaying above the torrent. This was what the captain-general and his army found when they reached the ravine, hoping to cross to the other side and give battle to the foe, whose galling fire was dealing death amid their ranks. But the bridge; it was gone! Nothing remained but a few shivering timbers, and the melting snow had swelled the torrent to a thundering flood. What next could be done? Who, in the face of those serried ranks and lines of muskets, would adventure himself upon that tottering plank?”

“Oh,” cried Yolante, with clasped hands and frightened eyes, “was there no other way of spanning the ravine?”

“No other. It must be crossed there, or the marquess must lead back a baffled army upon Durcal. Whilst the soldiers and officers stood hesitating, who should move forward but Father Christoval. His long gown was

tucked up. In his right hand he held his crucifix, in his left his naked sword. Stepping fearlessly upon the shaking planks, chanting some psalm as he moved, he crossed the roaring torrent, friends and foes alike gazing breathlessly at him, both for the moment ceasing their fire. When once he was safely over, a hundred pressed forward to the perilous transit. The firing was furiously resumed on both sides—Morisco marksmen seeking to single out each soldier who dared to cross the bridge, the Christians pouring volleys into the foe, and in particular clearing a landing-place for all who were able to cross. Some were shot down, some fell into the raging torrent, but more and more pressed on. Greater and greater grew the confidence of the soldiers, and soon a vigorous charge from those who had assembled on the farther bank put to flight the enemy, whilst the frail bridge was quickly strengthened for the passage of cavalry and stores; and by this the Christian army is doubtless before the gates of Orgiba, where the Christian garrison was still holding out.”

Yolante looked into the face of Don Miguel, and said,—

“You speak, señor, as though your heart was with the cause of the Christians. I am well pleased that it should be so, but I had heard a different tale of you.”

A dusky flush rose in the young man's face. He gave her one quick look, and his eyes fell.

“My heart is certainly with—the Christian—”

He paused, and Yolante felt as though she had trenched

upon what might reasonably be regarded as a painful theme.

She looked at him with a friendly smile.

“I am glad, señor. No doubt we have to make a difficult choice sometimes; but if we choose that which is highest and best, I think we never have cause to repent.”

CHAPTER VIII

A HEROIC MAIDEN.

“EUDO, Eudo! it is Eudo!”

E This joyous cry broke from Yolante, as she and Esther and Juanita were sitting in the *patio* one bright evening late in February. Flinging away a lapful of flowers which she was weaving into a garland for little Pepita, she sped across the court, and flung herself into the arms of the returning traveller, who looking thin and bronzed, and more the man than in old days, had yet lost the look of fragility which stamped him upon his arrival the previous autumn.

“Eudo, Eudo! can it be you in truth? Ah, how we have been waiting and watching! Sometimes my heart hath been sick with fear, in that you came not all those weary days and weeks. I had looked for you a month ago; but what matters it now? You are here—you are safe! Oh, how my heart rejoices in the sight of your dear face!”

Brother and sister clung together for a few moments; wrapped up in the joy of this reunion to the exclusion of all else. The children had rushed in with the news to

Doña Magdalena, who came hurrying out, and before long the excitement had spread to the larger palace, and the marchioness herself came forth to learn what tidings the young Englishman brought; but before this Eudo had had time to tell somewhat of his news.

“I thought myself to have come before; but there was so much to be done, so much to be thought of. I was set in charge of those hapless prisoners, women and children, who had fallen into the hands of the Moriscos, and were liberated upon the arrival of our armies. We found the first at Orgiba—brave Orgiba, which had held out so valiantly till our arrival. The garrison would inevitably have been starved to death—had it not surrendered first—but for the wily act of the brave alcajde, Don Gaspar de Sarabia, who, when he retreated with all the Christian population into the fortress, carried with him as hostages some Moorish women and a large number of little children. The parents and relatives of these secretly sent in a continual supply of provisions, which, carefully doled out, sustained life in the whole party. But they had all manner of perils to face from the fury of the foe. They assaulted them in every possible manner, even to erecting movable sheds to protect their own soldiers whilst they undermined the walls of the fortress and brought fagots to set it in a blaze. But by Don Gaspar’s orders boiling oil, flaming as it fell, was poured upon these sheds, and soon they were in a blaze, and the Moriscos being forced to take flight from them, were an easy mark for our sharpshooters, and were soon willing enough to turn

the assault into a blockade, from which we were happy enough to rescue them."

"O Eudo, you have seen terrible things! Has it not been one long battle ever since you left the Vega of Granada?"

"In sooth I might well say so. Toilsome marching and constant warfare have been our portion; and fain would I tell you all the tale, but that cannot be yet. I have much first to do. A few miles distant only are numbers of worn and weary creatures, weak women and helpless children, crushed by the terrible things they have suffered, and with the fatigues of the journey. Home and care must be found for them within the walls of Granada, where alone they can be safe. I have brought them thus far in safety, with a guard of brave soldiers to aid me, and there will be more to follow from other places whither our soldiers are marching. And, Yolante, listen! I have brought hither one whom you will receive, I doubt not, with joy and pleasure—one who is already as a friend—a noble maiden, one of Spain's heroines. Can you guess her name? for you know her."

For a moment Yolante stood perplexed for an answer, but then her face lighted with eager inspiration.

"Inez Arroyo!" she exclaimed.

"The same," he answered, "and already she is within the city. She has been like my right hand through all this perilous and toilsome march, cheering the women, caring for the children, never cast down, never fearful. Her own story will I not tell you; that must she do herself. But what her courage and strength and spirit

have been to all upon this journey, so full of danger, is beyond my power to describe. Ah! she is indeed one of those maids whose fame should live for ever in the page of history. She rode with me into the city but now, and sought her mother's house, only to find that her mother has quitted it and is now at Malaga. Doubtless the message she sent to Inez has never reached her in these disturbed days. But we cannot spare her from Granada; we want her here. The women and children will need her ministrations, for the courage her very presence inspires in them.—Doña Magdalena, I did make bold to tell her that she would be welcome here. Was I overbold? But I know the goodness of your heart; and the poor child is alone in the world, save for the uncle who remains behind in Marbella, hoping to return to his flock at Istan shortly, and the mother who has left Granada. I did think—”

“You thought right, Eudo; let the girl come hither to us. Must we not every one of us throw open our homes to these poor, persecuted fugitives sent hither for safety? All in Granada should vie with each other to give them welcome and shelter. Bring Inez Arroyo hither; she shall indeed receive a welcome here.”

Eudo's face was beaming. It was not hard to guess that Inez was not far away. In a few moments Eudo returned, leading her by the hand, and Yolante stepped eagerly forth to meet and greet her.

The girl had changed during those months which had passed since the journey towards Istan, when she had encountered the English brother and sister. She was very

thin, and her eyes looked almost too large for the hollow cheeks beneath them; and her clothing was torn, and soiled, and threadbare. But her face was bright with the fire of her own courage and devotion, and though one sob broke from her as Yolante held her in a sisterly embrace, yet the next minute she was mistress of herself, making a deep and graceful reverence to Doña Magdalena, to whom she began to make apology for thus presenting herself within the palace, when that lady stopped her lips by a kiss.

“You had little choice, methinks, my poor child. Don Eudo has settled this matter for you, and settled it rightly. And in truth you are welcome—you and those who are coming after. What! shall we call ourselves Christians and brethren, and in times like these fail in love and charity to our sisters and brothers who have borne the brunt of these terrible things?—Yolante, Juanita, take Inez away and give her food and wine, and fresh garments after a bath, and then bring her forth again; for the marchioness will be here anon, and will desire to hear the tale she has to tell. And she must first be refreshed and tended. Take her, and care for her well, for she needs it right sorely.”

The girls vanished almost at the same moment as the marchioness, attended by her daughters and ladies, and several gentlemen of her household, came eagerly into the Patio de los Leones, aware that some messenger had returned with news, and consumed with anxiety to hear what tidings he brought.

Hastily did Eudo reassure the lady as to the well-being of the marquess and of her sons. Although all had been often in sore peril, marching through wild defiles filled with unseen foes, who hurled down rocks and fired volleys into their ranks; though in battle the marquess and his sons were always in the forefront, and many perilous missions had been entrusted to the bold young men,—none had received injuries of any moment; and now there was at least a prospect of peace.

“Methinks it would have come sooner—come after the victory at Orgiba,” spoke Eudo; “for many Morisco chiefs sent embassies, offering submission if they could receive promise of such mercy as the captain-general greatly desires to extend to all. But at Jubules, alas, there was a sad catastrophe. We had thousands of Morisco prisoners, women and children as well as men. All that there was room for were confined within the church for safety—for the Spanish soldiers are not always to be trusted—but many had to be encamped in an open square under a guard. In the night some disturbance arose. A Spanish soldier sought to lay hands upon a Morisco maiden of great beauty. Her lover, disguised as a woman, was close at hand, and drawing a dagger from beneath his robe, he plunged it into the heart of the offending soldier. Before any commands from the officers could be issued, there was a confused fight raging throughout the square. The soldiers, whose fury had been raised to boiling point by all the stories of horror they had heard from Christian captives, wanted only some smallest excuse for falling upon their

captives. The guard of the church locked the doors, and so preserved the prisoners within those walls, but almost all the rest fell in indiscriminate slaughter; and when that was known, the emissaries who had come to sue for peace disappeared again, and the blaze of insurrection spread throughout the region round about. We had to fight the battles of Huécía, Felix, and Ohanez, and drive back the Moriscos from all their fastnesses, before their fury in any way abated, and they again began to see that the king is too strong a power for them to overthrow."

They hung upon his words breathlessly. Rumours of these events had reached them before, but these were confused and contradictory. Eudo spoke as one who had seen and shared in these perils of warfare. He had witnessed many of these things with his own eyes; he had heard the tale of others from eyewitnesses. But he had not time then for telling the half of what there was to tell. His own mission was urgent; he had other work to do.

"Madam," he said, addressing the marchioness, "another time I will tell more of these things, but for the moment we must bend our minds to other matters. Down in the Vega yonder, straggling upwards as they can, faint, weary, sick, travel-worn, and heartbroken, are a company of Christian captives, mostly women and children—for their men were done to death with awful cruelty, before the very eyes of those they loved best—and for these shelter has to be provided here in Granada. Within three hours they may arrive, and homes of some sort must needs be found for them. Already the news is flying through

the city. Horsemen are starting forth to carry up the most weak and helpless; women are preparing such things as will be most sorely wanted; and I come hither to speak with the governor, for his authority will be needed ere all can be safely bestowed."

Instantly the whole place was in a tumult of excitement and preparation. Within the precincts of the Alhambra were many buildings which might be utilized as asylums for the refugees from the Alpuxarras. There was the great empty Casa de Aguilar itself, which Doña Magdalena instantly put at the disposal of the governor for the use of the sick and destitute. All Granada was moved to its core. The city was humming like a hive of bees disturbed. As the news spread that the *cortége* was approaching, the whole place turned out to meet and greet the hapless fugitives, and tears rained down the faces of even stern and hardened veterans as the procession filed in through the beautiful gates of Elvira and Bib-arrambla.

First came the horsemen—the troopers who had escorted the company, and those who had ridden forth to meet it; and every rider had two or more children fastened upon his saddle or clinging around his neck. Sometimes a well-mounted trooper could scarcely be seen for the cluster of thin and ragged little ones he had managed to secure about him, or he might hold in front of him a sick woman who had dropped by the way through fatigue and illness. Then came an immense body of women, white and wan, ragged and shoeless, with bleeding feet and unbound hair—some weeping and clinging to those who had come forth to meet

them, sobbing out the terrible tales they had to tell of what they had passed through, what they had seen and suffered; others walking alone stony and stunned, scarce seeming conscious of what was passing, or that their perils and hardships were at an end. The dismal procession was brought up by the few men who had escaped the fury of the foe, and the foot-soldiers who guarded the road of the cavalcade. The sinking sun lighted up the whole scene with a wonderful golden radiance, and the effect was heightened by the sudden appearance of a band of vested priests, led by the archbishop himself, who came forward to meet the hapless fugitives and to give them benediction; whereupon even the most stony faces suddenly relaxed, and the women with one accord fell upon their knees and broke into wild weeping.

It was a moving spectacle, and none that saw it ever forgot the scene. They poured into the cathedral with one accord, and there prayers and thanksgivings were solemnly offered up; and the brief service being ended, the citizens vied with one another in proffers of kindness and hospitality to the poor outcasts. All who had friends or relatives in the city found asylum with them; others were taken possession of by pitying strangers. The guard from the Alhambra, with the Count of Tendilla at its head, did good service in arranging for whole families and villages to be accommodated within certain large deserted houses such as the Casa de Aguilar. For the residue which then remained accommodation was to be found in the Alhambra, whither the poor, exhausted wanderers were

tenderly conducted by soldiers and citizens, and graciously received by the marchioness. Tears rained down her face as she listened to their piteous tales, and with her own hands she supplied many of their most pressing wants, carrying away the little children to the spacious quarters prepared for them. There Esther, Inez, and Yolante were waiting to receive them, to bathe and clothe and feed them, and put them into the little soft beds which had been hastily made ready.

Yolante's eyes sometimes flashed with anger, sometimes filled with tears, as she noted the condition of the little ones. Some could lisp out piteous tales of what they had seen and suffered, but more were too much exhausted to talk, and clung to Inez first, and afterwards to all three girls, with a sort of dumb appeal that was pathetic in the extreme. At every martial sound from the Alcazaba they would at first start and even scream, and ask if the Moriscos were coming; but as they grew more assured, and a sense of security fell upon them, they were quickly pacified, and almost as soon as they were laid to rest they sank into a deep and dreamless slumber from which there was little likelihood that they would quickly waken.

"We will go and tell the mothers," spoke Inez, who during the march had come to know many of the women, and who had been from the first a power amongst them. Esther and Yolante led the way to those apartments which had been set aside for the fugitives, and gave the weary, sad-eyed mothers good news of their little ones. Esther was peculiarly at home amongst those bowed down by

sorrow or sickness. She had gone about amongst such for many years now, and the sound of her voice and the touch of her hand seemed to bring strength and comfort and healing. She took possession as by natural right of those who were the most suffering and feeble, dressed their wounds, brought them such food as was suited to their condition, and soothed them to sorely-needed slumber by her tender ministrations. Inez braced up those whose hearts were failing, and talked of happier days to come. Juanita went amongst them with smiles and gifts, and brought answering smiles to many wan faces by her words of cheer. Yolante hung breathless with interest, excitement, and horror whilst many of those, less worn out than others, were able to tell the tale of horrors which they had witnessed and shared in—how from peace and security and smiling happiness they had suddenly awakened, sometimes in the dead of night, to find their houses attacked by furious Moriscos, howling for their blood, mad with insensate fury, dragging out shrieking victims from their houses, and putting them to death with every refinement of cruelty.

Awful tales were told of sieges in church or fortress, where perhaps rescue had come only at the last moment. Those who had escaped knew that others had perished in indiscriminate slaughter, and amongst the fugitives were many who had been saved from death only to be kept awhile ere they were sold into slavery to the Barbary pirates—a fate far worse than death, and from which they had been saved by the victorious arms of the captain-general.

“How long will it last? oh, how long can it last?” asked Yolante, in a sort of agony, thinking of what might be passing even now amid many lonely mountain fastnesses, where small villages were to be found perched amid the crags, with some few Christian inhabitants among a Morisco community. But the women could not answer her. There were, indeed, rumours of peace; but they who had seen for themselves the horrid outbreak of Moslem fury felt more fear than hope. They had grown up in peace with their dusky neighbours; no thought of war was in their hearts. Yet in a moment all had been changed, and who could say how long the fire had been smouldering, or how quickly the fierce flames would be quenched in blood?

It was late that evening ere the labour of love was completed, and the noble ladies, who had toiled as hard as their servants to minister to the wants and necessities of the refugees, were able to gather together for their own evening repast, and to hear the story which Inez Arroyo had to tell.

It was told by her very simply, as she sat beside Yolante, holding her hand, whilst Juanita took a low seat at her feet, and gazed with wonder-wide eyes into her face. Eudo stood a few paces off, his eyes betraying, to his sister at least, the admiration in which he held this daughter of Spain. Inez had not desired a place among the noble ladies, who this evening had dined together, and were now assembled in one of the smaller staterooms of the modern palace, where the marchioness had her home in Granada; but she had been overborne by the others, dressed

by Yolante in one of her own white robes, and she had too much simple dignity and unconsciousness of self to be overpowered by the situation.

"I was living at Istan, señora," she said, in response to a question from the marchioness, "with my uncle the priest. He and I and our servant-maid were the only Christians in the village; but we had no fears. We were not far from the town of Marbella, and we had always lived at peace with our neighbours, who were also our friends. They came to Mass on Sundays, and confessed to my uncle; and though we knew that at heart they were infidels, like so many more in their case, we never thought of them as enemies, and my uncle always hoped that little by little they would come to a knowledge of the true faith, and become Christian in more than name."

"And did you hear nothing of the threatened troubles? And did your uncle not fear to let you remain with him in such stormy and perilous times?"

"Madam, we heard but little—nothing that disturbed us. For above a year there had been talk of strife and bloodshed, but the days and weeks fled by, and nought had come to trouble the country. You know how sudden was the rising when it did come. Ere we had a whisper of warning the Moriscos were upon us."

"And where were you, my child, when this terrible thing happened? Did you and your uncle take refuge in the church, like so many others in these terrible days?"

"There was no time for that," answered Inez, "and, as it chanced, my uncle was not within our house walls when

the attack was made. With him it was thus :—He had gone out, as usual, to take the air in the early morning, and had met with a convert from another village, who had come to do some tailoring in Istan. Suddenly they found themselves set upon by a party of armed Moors. Had it not been that a friendly Morisco opened his doors to take them in, and helped them away to the mountains afterwards, they must have perished; but as it was they escaped, and fled to give the alarm at Marbella, and to ask for help from thence.”

“Leaving you and your servant to face the Moors alone?” asked Doña Magdalena, in a tone of horror.

“It could not be helped,” answered Inez. “My uncle is no man of war. He was unarmed and helpless. He would have been instantly slain, and then we too must have perished. He did what was best and wisest by fleeing to Marbella, and in so doing he brought about our escape.”

“But what then happened to you, poor children, all alone amid a host of bloodthirsty foes?”

“It was thus,” answered Inez simply :—“My uncle had no house built for him by the church, as some priests have. He lived in a small Moorish fortalice or tower, which had fallen into a ruinous state before he had taken the trouble to build it up bit by bit, but which now the Moriscos thought they would find useful for themselves. In the tower there was a large room below, where we stored our grain and oil and such things as we need for winter food, and from this large room a steep staircase leads up into the tower above, where are a few small rooms, enough for

our use. I was in one of those upper rooms, when Joanna came running to me with a white, scared face. 'Mistress,' she cried, 'the Moriscos have risen. Little Hassan has just signalled to me from his house. The master is out—Heaven alone knows where—and the Moriscos have entered by the door, which he left open as usual, and are already making away with all our stores. When they have done that, they will come hither and slay us.' On hearing that, I went down to see for myself; and so it was. I could see the Moriscos moving about below, as I stood in the shadow at the top of the steps. For a moment my heart died within me; but then I saw that our Lady had not left us quite defenceless. My uncle was always engaged in restoring the tower, and he had gradually amassed a great quantity of large stones for this purpose, and a great number of these had already been carried up as far as the top of the steps leading from the lower room to the tower above. In a whisper I told Joanna what I would do and what she must do; and when the Moriscos were fully engaged in rolling away our cask of oil, we both began rolling and hurling down upon them these great stones, and so took them by surprise that in their panic all fled out at the open door, save one, who never moved again after the stone had crashed down upon his skull."

"You sent them flying!" cried Yolante, with flashing eyes—"you two maidens, with no help from without?"

"Yes, they fled out at the door; and rushing down, we secured it, and built up a barrier of stones against it.

Then we turned back to our tower once more, carrying to the battlements as many stones as we could collect in the time. Fortunately there was also a heap already there, to heighten the parapet; and when we looked over and saw the Moriscos returning, we knew we were ready for them again."

"O my child," exclaimed Doña Magdalena, "do you mean that the miscreants came back to attack two helpless maidens, with none to succour or defend them?"

"Oh yes," answered Inez, with a smile. "The Moriscos can be good friends when they choose, but they are bitter, bitter foes. And chivalry forms no part of their creed. They came, and we rained down our stones upon them. We knew the tower was safe unless they forced the door; and we stood and looked down upon the men that set themselves to that task, and we aimed our stones at all who dared approach."

"Ay," broke in Eudo, as though he could no longer keep silence, "and aimed so coolly and so true that for six hours those two brave women kept at bay the whole force of Moriscos, notwithstanding that Doña Inez was wounded through the shoulder by an arrow—for they set their best marksmen to try to disable the gallant Amazon garrison, and the bravest of its defenders was wounded."

"It was nothing," spoke the girl, whose colour flew up at thus hearing herself praised; "and all the while we were expecting relief, and presently it came. We saw the glitter of lances and head-pieces; we heard the shout of 'Santiago!' and we saw how our assailants fled hither

and thither as they learned the approach of the Spanish soldiers. It was but for a few hours that we held our tower. Any others would have done it in our place. If our supply of stones had given out, then it would have been terrible indeed; but our Lord and the blessed Virgin watched over us and helped us, and brought us safely through."

She spoke with such simplicity that they could not but smile. The idea of being a heroine never entered her thoughts. She had done what any other person in her place would have done—that was her way of regarding the matter, and she shrank from hearing her praises sung.

"But she has been the heroine of Marbella ever since," said Eudo, with enthusiasm. "I myself saw the captain of the troop of horse sent to Istan to subdue the rising there, and I know what the soldiers of that place say of the exploit of Inez Arroyo."

CHAPTER IX.

STORMY SPRINGTIDE.

THE glorious springtide of the south was clothing the Vega of Granada with a mantle of verdure and with all the hues of the rainbow. The snows were melting and shrinking from all but the loftiest mountain peaks. The glory of the coming summer was in the very air, and beautiful Granada was looking her loveliest, set in her diadem of hills. Yet the hearts of men were heavy within them, and the shadow of fear or of sorrow lay heavy on their hearts; for although the Marquess of Mondejar was marching towards the city, and they were preparing something of a triumphal entry for him—that is, one party of the citizens and officials was doing this—none dared to assert that the war was over, or that it was likely to be quickly ended, and some feared that the misfortunes and horrors which already had taken place were but the foretaste and harbinger of more to follow.

In the Casa de Aguilar all was bustle and preparation. Three days ago the family of Don Rodrigo had vacated their quarters in the palace of the Alhambra and returned to their own home, bringing with them as recognized members of the household Esther Vivar and Inez Arroyo.

“We cannot spare you, sweet Esther,” Doña Magdalena had said when the question of the move was first spoken of, since it was known that Don Rodrigo and his son would accompany the marquess back to Granada, and that with him would come such a following as would necessitate the vacating of the quarters within the precincts of the Alhambra for the train he would bring thither. “You are as one of us now, and in the Casa de Aguilar we shall still find some few sick and helpless persons who will need our care and tendance. We cannot spare you yet, and methinks your father will not wish you back within the precincts of the Albaycin. Alas! since that horrible massacre in the prison, and since the stern decrees of the young Count of Tendilla, the Moriscos, though sullen and subdued, hate with a more bitter hatred those whom they have never loved. *Ay de mi!* we live in sorrowful days; but God grant that with the coming of Don Juan some unity may prevail in the councils of the rulers, and we may be relieved from this state of discord and horror!”

Esther's father had gratefully and willingly consented to his daughter's protracted visit to her friends, for he had indeed good cause to know how terribly bitter was the feeling against the Christians which now prevailed in the Albaycin—far more bitter than it had been at the outbreak of the insurrection.

There was good cause for this. Count Tendilla, whose former good will towards the Moriscos had been changed to a violent hatred, had used harsh methods towards them during his governorship, and had insisted on quartering

Spanish soldiers not only within the Albaycin itself—for the Moriscos had not objected to that, and had even provided empty houses in all localities there for their occupation, and had offered to keep them well supplied with food—but also in the inhabited houses of the Moriscos themselves, and had given them the right of entry even into that part of these houses which was reserved solely for the women, saying that the edict lately published did away entirely with the ancient Eastern fashion of keeping the women of the family rigidly secluded. All were now to live in the Western manner. This was deeply resented as a monstrous outrage, and a deputation of the most loyal and peaceable Spanish Moriscos of the city, including Ben Abner—or Vivar, as he was now more generally called—was sent to make a representation on the subject to the young governor. But all was in vain. Tendilla received them, indeed, but insisted that his own plan was the only one which could guard against treasonable meetings and conspiracies being held and hatched in the Albaycin, and the embassy withdrew, deeply offended at the lack of consideration they had met with.

Very shortly after this, during the early months of the year, numbers of Moriscos had been arrested on various charges, and shut up in the prison of the Chancellory, under the care of the president, Deza, a man always the advocate of stern and cruel methods of repression, and always opposed to the moderate and merciful policy of the captain-general, Mondejar.

Just a short while before the return of the marquess,

whilst rumours of fresh troubles in the Alpuxarras were pouring into Granada, some stories got afloat of a plot for a general rising in the Albaycin. Fear and confusion prevailed. The irritated soldiers and alarmed citizens were thrown into something approaching a panic, and there came a night when the sight of beacon fires blazing on some mountain heights within sight of Granada awoke more immediate apprehensions. What happened has never been altogether clearly explained. Soldiers declared they saw answering fires in the Albaycin, blazing on house-tops or from windows. A furious panic ensued, and, to the indelible disgrace of the authorities, the hapless Morisco prisoners within the Chancellory prison were butchered by the Spanish soldiers, and also by their fellow-prisoners of the Christian faith, to whom arms had been supplied by their jailers for the purpose.

When the news of this tumult reached Count Tendilla, he marched at once with a strong guard to the Albaycin, but found all quiet there—nothing to justify the rumours of alarm which were flying through the city. He was turning his steps to the prison next, when a message reached him from Deza to say that he need not trouble himself to come there: all was quiet, for all the Moriscos were dead! Fierce as was the spirit of the young count, he was horrified to hear of the shameful massacre; but Deza regarded it as a justifiable act, and professed no regret at the calamity.

It was not, then, to be wondered at if Moors who had been hesitating between two opinions should resolve now

to cast in their lot with their brethren in revolt. Peaceable loyalty availed them nothing, as was being proved again and again in districts of the Alpuxarras, where villages which had submitted, and were furnished with a letter safeguarding them from the attacks of Spanish soldiers, signed by the Marquess of Mondejar, were constantly being harried, despoiled, and all inhabitants slain or taken captive by the soldiers of Los Velez, who refused to be bound by any document that had not been countersigned by their own leader.

It was this sort of thing which had roused the Alpuxarras from end to end, and had caused the fierce flames of revolt to burst forth again in districts which Mondejar hoped he had brought to submission. And now, when in Granada itself the Moors went in daily fear of their lives, it was small wonder that numbers of them fled secretly from the Albaycin, to join their comrades in adversity in other places, reckoning it better, if perish they must, to perish sword in hand, fighting to the last, than to be trapped like rats in a hole, without the hope of escape.

When Señor Vivar presented himself in Spanish dress at the Casa de Aguilar to see his daughter, his face was very grave and troubled; and he had much to tell the ladies, who welcomed him, and desired of him an account of what was passing within the Moorish quarter.

“Alas, señoras, dark days are hanging over this land and city, I fear. Although I myself have chosen the Christian cause and made it mine, have laid aside my Moorish dress and the use of the Moorish tongue, and

have conformed to the edicts for the sake of the faith I profess, I cannot but hold that the king is making a grievous error, and that rivers of blood will yet be shed. I will live whilst I can amongst my Moorish brethren; I will strive to persuade them to patience and submission. But it is more and more difficult to make them believe that the Christians are not bent upon their destruction; and can we wonder, when their kinsfolk from the mountains come and persuade them, that they fly from Granada with them, and join the bands of rebels without?"

"I cannot wonder at it—poor people!" spoke Doña Magdalena gently; "and now that the winter is gone and the summer is coming fast upon us, the hardships which might daunt the dwellers in cities before will seem as nothing now—better than the perils which threaten them sometimes in Granada itself. Yet I trust and hope that when the marquess himself returns, matters in Granada will be better. He is merciful, and ever advocates the policy of mercy and conciliation."

"Yes; but who listens to his words?" asked Vivar, with a subdued flash in his eyes. "Not the president here, nor even his son; not the 'Devil's Iron Head,' that other marquess, who comes from the east with fire and sword to devour and waste; not the king in his cabinet, who hears what both advisers say, and ever follows the counsels of those who advocate bloodshed, cruelty, force. *Ay de mi!* we live in fearful days.—Esther, have you heard? Ayesha's father, El Zegry, entered the Albaycin some fortnight ago, soon after the news of the massacre of Moorish

prisoners had been made known, and insisted upon carrying away from Granada his daughter, my wife, and Zareefa to a place of safety in the mountains. He declared that Granada was no safe abode for any Morisco woman; that the soldiers were not to be trusted; that no one could know what new edicts might not soon be passed. Already rumours are afloat that soon all Moriscos will be expelled from Granada, as a source of danger to the Christians there—a paltry plea, as it seems to me. I could not refuse him. Ayesha herself and Zareefa have become filled with fears. At heart they are of the Moorish faith; with them the teaching of the Christian priests has made but little way. You know that?”

Esther bent her head. She knew it well. She loved her stepmother and half-sister, and had often sought to imbue them with her own ardent faith; but with her, reared in Jewish surroundings for the first few years of her life, and then accepting Christianity as the outcome of that faith, all had been very different from what a purely Moorish maiden had experienced. Ayesha was in everything purely Oriental, and all her sympathies were now with the persecuted Moriscos. When her father came, she had flung herself and her daughter upon his protection. Granada had become terrible to her. She felt safe neither for herself nor her beautiful young daughter within its walls; and her warlike father told her that in his castle of Frigiliana, away in the mountains, she would be safe as an eagle in its eyrie. Inaccessible, perched high upon a rock, garrisoned by his wild, hardy followers, no

Christian host could ever effect entrance there. He could protect his daughter and her child, and the husband had not found it in his heart to oppose the plan.

“God in heaven alone knows where safety for Moors is to be found in this distracted realm. But at least I would not seek to hinder them. They are gone, and I confess I breathe more freely. For the present they are safe, and the future we must leave.”

“Then may I not come back to you, my father?” spoke Esther. “Are you not solitary and alone in our deserted home?”

“No; for I have given over my house for the reception of all Morisco prisoners, who are coming into Granada now in such great numbers that the authorities do not well know where to bestow them. I have offered my house to them. It is garrisoned by soldiers, who guard the captives; and I go to and fro seeing that they have all they need. Nay, my child, the Albaycin is now no place for you. If our kind friends will keep you yet awhile within their sheltering walls, I shall be grateful and glad; for my time is occupied from morning till night, and our home is broken up, perchance never to be reunited.”

It was so throughout Southern Spain just now. The fierce tide of war was sweeping through the land, and scarce a household but missed some member away at the seat of strife, never perhaps to return. Esther asked for the two brothers Don Miguel and Don Manuel, whom they had not seen for a short while now. Her father slightly shook his head.

"Methinks they must be absent from Granada. I, too, have not seen them of late. I would I were more certain what part they are playing. They profess zealous loyalty within the walls of Granada, but outside are other rumours."

"I thought they had thrown in their lot with the Christians," spoke Yolante; "they did certainly say so to us."

Señor Vivar bent his head, but his eyes were grave.

"That is their profession. I hope that they are sincere. It has been a hard choice for them, as it has for many others; and had they chosen differently, they would have had no reproaches from me. It is not given to all to see the truth in Christ Jesus"—and the gray head was reverently bowed—"and God is merciful even to the unbelieving and hard of heart when they are sincere and upright. That which I fear me is like to happen with some is to seek favour with both sides, and betray the one to the other. God forgive me if I do them wrong in sometimes fearing lest they are playing the part of spies!"

"O father, let us not think that," said Esther. "I have had much talk with Don Manuel, and in sooth I think, though grieved at heart with what he sees, he is true to his adopted faith. They have their faults, and many of them—I have called them ere this 'sons of thunder'—but I cannot well believe they would sink to treachery or falsehood. They have halted betwixt two opinions, but now methinks their hearts are fixed and set."

Yolante thought the same. She was interested in these brothers, who were so essentially strange to her, but had been, as it were, amongst her first friends in this new land. No thought of love had ever entered her head. She had not been trained to regard as possible lovers the gallants who approached her. In England she had known numbers of young knights and gentlemen of her father's household, and here in Spain she had had numbers of others presented to her. Moreover, she could not deny that one of those gallant caballeros had taken a place in her imagination, if not in her heart, which excluded the thought of love from any other. And to a girl of Yolante's nationality and training the difference in blood betwixt West and East was far more keenly felt than in a land where the admixture had been a matter of centuries. Whatever these brothers might call themselves in faith, they were to Yolante sons of the East. As such they interested her keenly, and it pleased her fancy to speak of them as friends and to treat them with friendship. But the idea of any closer tie never entered her thoughts; had it done so, it would have been instantly dismissed with a species of repulsion. There are things which cannot be argued about, but which seem ingrained in the very heart of nature, and the race tie is one of these, whether uniting or dividing.

And now the Casa de Aguilar was decked from end to end. The outer court, facing the street, was a mass of flowers and gaily-striped Spanish rugs or brilliant-hued embroideries. All the household was in holiday trim, and

the ladies had donned their gayest robes. Through the streets came the sound of cheers and shouts, and already the prancing of horse-hoofs was heard advancing; whilst the cheers from without were taken up by those standing drawn up at the gateway, and were distinctly heard in the inner court, where Doña Magdalena was awaiting her lord and master.

They had not gone forth to see the entrance of the marquis into the city. They preferred to await the coming of their own party to the Casa de Aguilar. The slight infusion of English blood into this household perhaps made outward exhibition of feeling in public somewhat distasteful; and it was within the walls of his own fair house that Don Rodrigo clasped his wife to his heart, and embraced his children and relatives one by one, whilst tears ran down many faces, and words of welcome were choked as they came bursting from the heart.

Antonio was with his father, and behind them some few chosen companions and friends, who, returning to the city, already crowded by soldiers and knights and their servants, had given up their lodgings to strangers, and had accepted for themselves the hospitality of friends. Amongst these latter was Don Garcia de Manriques. Yolante's quick eyes instantly singled him out from the group standing a little back from the eager family reunion. She knew him instantly by his stately height, but for a moment she had to look before she was quite able to identify his face, it was so very worn and white and hollow, and he carried his arm slung from the shoulder, and stood with his back

braced against a column of the colonnade, as though he needed support.

Forgetting all else in pity for his evident weakness and suffering, Yolante detached herself from the group round Don Rodrigo and glided to his side. She saw that he still carried, fastened upon the shoulder by means of the scarf-sling, a knot of faded ribbon and torn lace, which she instantly recognized with a little thrill of pleasure and wonder.

"Don Garcia, you are wounded—you are weary," she said, with a gentle solicitude and friendliness. "You have ridden far in this hot sun, and have suffered. Come away out of this heat and noise, and I will get you a cooling draught, and the leech shall see to your hurts."

He drew himself up and bowed low over the hand she extended to him, touching it with his lips, and murmuring words of thanks; but Antonio's voice broke in upon them at this moment with a cheery word of approval.

"That is right, fair cousin. This pageant has been something too much for him. He should have been sent into the city in a litter, but he revolted from the thought, and rode with the rest of us. But now he must rest.—Come, Manriques; yonder little curtained room is vacant, and will not be invaded. We will have a quiet hour of enjoyment there, and hear and tell all our news.—Juanita, sweet one, let us have some provision brought thither to us.—And come, serve us yourselves, fair ladies; for we are worn and weary, and thirsting for the sight of home faces, and the sound of sweeter music than the clash of arms

and the strife of tongues. Ah! this is good; this makes up for all that has gone before. Don Garcia will take his share anon in talk, as he has taken more than his share of peril and wounds. Yes, you shall hear all our adventures, in the days that are coming; but let us for a brief while forget that there is such a thing as warfare in the world, and enjoy the delights of peace."

It was indeed a joy to the wayworn, warworn soldiers to find themselves in this delightful flower-scented room, separated by curtains from the outer court, and with a great open arcade overlooking the glorious gorge of the Xenil, each column festooned with blossom, the room filled with the scent of orange and myrtle—everything bespeaking peace, harmony, and rest.

Endo and Esther quickly joined the youthful portion of the family; and Esther, with a few deft touches, and by the help of cold-water applications, soothed the severe pain in Don Garcia's inflamed and badly-injured arm which the fatigues and excitements of the day had engendered. Yolante brought him fruit and wine and ice, and such things as he could take; whilst Antonio, who had passed through the three months' campaign almost without a scratch, told story after story of the prowess of friend or foe, of the toilsome marches, the furious battles, the tedious sieges, and all the ups and downs of the fortunes of the Christian arms from the time they had marched forth from Granada until their return.

"But, brother, if the Moriscos are not subdued, if all the Alpuzarras is in revolt, wherefore are you come

hither?" asked Juanita breathlessly. "Methought the mar-
quess would not return till he had put down the revolt
with a firm hand."

"And he had put it down!" cried Antonio, smiting his
hand upon the table, his face clouding. "Again and again,
by his clemency to prisoners, his honourable treatment of
women, his refusal to give up conquered cities to loot and
plunder—greatly to the disgust of the soldiers—he had
won whole districts to submission. He never forgot, how-
ever much provoked, that if Spain is yet to flourish in
these fair regions, Christians and Moors must dwell there
together; wherefore he never suffered that to be done
which shut the door upon peace and made talk of recon-
ciliation hopeless. He struck hard; he conquered as he
marched; but he would have left peace and submission
behind him had it not been for others."

"The Marquess de Los Velez?" asked Yolante breath-
lessly. "In Granada they say that he is fiercely jealous
of our captain-general, and opposes his methods at every
point."

"And so he does. He is a fierce, cruel, arrogant noble,
and he desires the foremost place in field and in council.
He will not listen to counsels of moderation. Everywhere
desolation and rapine and murder follow in his steps. He
has set once again in a blaze all the eastern portion of the
Alpuxarras; and more than this, he has sent messengers
of his own to Madrid, making representations against the
milder methods of Mondejar, and we know what effect that
is like to have upon the king, who is already incensed to

a mighty pitch of fury against his Moorish subjects for the atrocities they have inflicted upon Christians."

"And President Deza has sent an embassy too," cried Juanita. "It is whispered that he wishes all the Moriscos expelled from Granada, and sent into other cities of Spain, whether they will or no; not only those who are yet infidels at heart, and only submit outwardly to the laws, but those who really have been converted, and would gladly live as Spaniards under Spanish rule. The president and the archbishop are leagued together in this, and half the nobles of the city are with them."

Antonio nodded his head; they, too, had heard somewhat of that.

Don Garcia looked up from his pile of cushions with the ghost of a smile, and remarked to Yolante in a low voice,—

"Truly Don Juan will find this no bed of roses when he comes to take supreme command."

"Is Don Juan, then, the king's brother, really coming? And what manner of man is he?"

All turned to Don Garcia at this question, for he was known to have been one of the companions of Don Juan of Austria in bygone days. His father had been living at that time, and had dwelt in Madrid, and had held an appointment at the court. When Don Garcia was a gallant youth of twenty summers, and Don Juan was fifteen, he had been for several years one of his regular attendants and companions, and had indeed only quitted this service and come to Granada upon his father's death,

when he found himself master of his fortune and future, and was drawn southward by family interests which have no concern with this story.

“He is a gallant prince, and there is about him a charm which few can resist, though few can explain it. In matters of warfare I have no knowledge of what he can accomplish, for I had just quitted his service ere he received his naval command, and I only know what all the world does of his doings with the fleet, and his inspection of the Turkish and Spanish defences along this and the Barbary coast. What I can vouch for is that he is a most gallant and noble-hearted caballero and prince, and that his kinship with His Majesty has not endowed him with any of those attributes of procrastination, cunning, or cruelty which we see at every turn in him.”

“And how old is he now?” asked Yolante, with interest.

“He must have turned twenty-one summers,” was the reply, “but he has the air and bearing of an older man. He has been trained from his youth in habits of industry, self-control, and authority. I believe that all will give him ready obedience and submission. His head is steady, his judgment sound, and he is of a moderate and reasonable disposition, and withal as brave as a lion.”

“That is good hearing,” spoke Esther gravely, “for in sooth we need such a wise and well-balanced head to guide these troublous matters here. And doubtless the haughty nobles, who are ready to fly at each other’s throats, and are distracting the country with diverse methods and policy,

will unite together without rivalry or enmity beneath the rule of the king's brother."

"That is what is hoped," answered Antonio; "and the Marquess of Mondejar, on his side, is very willing to resign the command into the hands of the young prince. Whether Los Velez will be equally ready remains to be proved. But at least we shall have one head instead of many, and the king is known to repose great confidence and affection in his brother. We must hope for the best, and pray for a happy issue from these troubles, leaving the result in the hands of God."

CHAPTER X.

THE NEW COMMANDER.

DON JUAN had come! All the city was *en fête*. Balconies were festooned with flowers and draped with brilliant hangings. Bright eyes looked forth from every lattice to see the new deliverer, as he was freely styled, ride into the city. All the nobles had flocked out to give him greeting beyond the walls, and his entrance through the Elvira gate was a scene of joy and triumph.

The king's brother had come! This was the sign and promise of a better state of things; so all Granada said and thought. The war had hitherto been treated merely as a local outbreak, to be dealt with by local forces. Now that after six months' warfare Aben Humeysa was holding regal sway almost throughout the Alpuxarras, now that there had been massacre after massacre of helpless Christians, and no corresponding lasting triumph to Christian arms, all men felt that stronger methods must be adopted, and that a central authority must be established, since the haughty nobles, who had risen eagerly to march against the infidels and avenge the blood of their fellow-Christians,

could not agree in council, and each advocated a different policy.

Even in the triumphant entry of Don Juan into Granada evidences of divided counsel and jealous distrust were seen; for at one point the gay procession was met by a company of Christian women clad in black garments, with dishevelled hair and streaming eyes, who fell on their knees before Don Juan, raising frantic hands to heaven, crying aloud upon him to avenge their cruel wrongs, telling how their husbands and children had been cruelly slaughtered before their very eyes, and that nothing had been done to avenge their death upon the foes of Christendom.

This, of course, was aimed as a blow at the Marquess of Mondejar, on account of his merciful policy towards Moriscos. But it was grossly untrue; for the record of the past months showed its black tale of horrible cruelties on the part of Christian warriors, even within the walls of Granada itself, when El Zamar was done to death by the Count of Tendilla in terrible fashion after the fall of Guajaras, and Aben Aboo was inhumanly treated in order to force him to betray the hiding-place of Aben Humeya (who had escaped from his house only as the soldiers rushed in), although Aben Aboo had hitherto been a quiet and loyal Morisco living under government protection.

But it suited the party leagued against Mondejar to make out that the present unsatisfactory condition of affairs was the fault of the captain-general, and this pageant of woe had been carefully planned by the president, Deza, to enhance the effect of his representations.

Matrons and maidens with streaming eyes called aloud for justice, and Don Juan paused to speak a few kindly words to them, commiserating their misfortunes, and promising that he would do what lay in his power for the prosecution of the campaign against those foes who had robbed them of all they held dear.

The face of the young prince was inscrutable as he rode through the gaily-decked streets. None of those whose eyes were fastened upon it could read the thoughts which lay concealed beneath that courteous, impassive exterior. It was the boast of the king, his brother, that he never betrayed emotion, whatever that emotion might be; and, perhaps by inheritance or by training, Don Juan had some measure of this quiet self-repression. His clear, piercing eyes seemed to take in everything around him; he received the plaudits of the multitude, the deputations of the civil and military authorities, the flattering acclamations of the high-born ladies of Granada, with the same quiet courtesy and dignity. It was difficult to believe that this quiet, keen-eyed man was barely two-and-twenty. There was a dignity and composure about him which seemed to bespeak more mature years, and gave confidence even to veterans as to the capacity of the new commander.

Don Juan was not lodged in the Alhambra, as perhaps he had expected, but in the great Palace of the Audience—the Palace of Misfortune, as the Moriscos significantly called it—where the president, Deza, also had his quarters. It was very plain to the captain-general that there was a

regular cabal on foot against him, and that he had little to hope for in the future save in the justice and integrity of Don Juan. Of course his command of the forces had now passed into the hands of the young prince, but he knew that his enemies would willingly have seen him degraded also from his post of governor of the city.

Excitement and speculation ran high in the Casa de Aguilar, the members of which household were in the main loyal to Mondejar, and believers in his temperate policy. They returned to tell Don Garcia what they had seen and heard, the young caballero having been reluctantly obliged to forego the pleasure of witnessing the entry of his former master and friend.

Don Garcia had been prostrated by a sharp attack of fever almost immediately upon his arrival at Granada. For some days the inflammation in arm and shoulder was severe enough to excite no small anxiety; and it was to Esther's skill, and to the clever nursing which she and Inez Arroyo bestowed upon the wounded man, that his rapid recovery was due. But though in great measure recovered, he was still unable to risk a recurrence of the fever by exposing himself to fatigue in the hot sunshine of a brilliant mid-April day, and he was forced to remain at home, and to hear the account from the ladies when they returned. They had occupied the balcony of the house of a friend, since the procession came nowhere near the Casa de Aguilar.

"He is not so handsome as I hoped," cried Juanita, "and yet he is very noble and princely to look at. One

forgets that other men are more handsome; one looks only at him. I know not how to say it, but there is something in his face which draws one's eyes and makes one's heart beat. Ah, how I should tremble and quake were I a malefactor led before him for justice!"

"It is a face full of power," spoke Esther thoughtfully. "I trow it is such a man as that who is wanted here. Yet methinks he looks neither cruel nor bloodthirsty. It is a face that one can trust."

"He has a kingly presence," spoke Yolante. "It is strange the power of royalty! I feel it ever in presence of our queen in England. She is not great of stature, nor more beautiful than others, whatever courtiers may pretend; and oftentimes she lays aside her outward state and pomp, and laughs and jests freely and with a youthful gaiety of heart. And yet one can never forget that she is queen. There is a look in her eye—a turn of the head—I know not what to name it. And I felt the same thrill as I gazed at Don Juan to-day. He is a prince, and one feels it."

"That is very true," answered Don Garcia, with a smile. "I am well pleased that others feel it too. I would that I had been there to see. But my time must come another day. Don Juan is not one who will forget."

It came sooner than any expected. It was but three days later, and the greater part of the household of the Casa de Aguilar had assembled, to drink coffee and exchange the day's experiences, upon one of the many beautiful terraces overlooking the gorge of the Xenil, when some

servants, approaching in a sidewise fashion, and with many marks of great respect, ushered a visitor into their presence, speaking his name with marked respect,—

“His Excellency Don Juan of Austria.”

All were instantly on their feet. All eyes were fixed upon the knightly figure advancing towards them. Don Rodrigo, who had been presented before, together with his son, went forward with respectful welcome and greeting, expressing their astonishment and gratitude at this act of condescension; but Don Juan waved his hand as though to dismiss ceremony, and spoke in a frank and open fashion which won all hearts.

“Nay, señor, let us lay aside state and formality. It has been told me that a friend and comrade of mine is a guest beneath this roof, and he will bear witness that too much pomp and ceremony irk and weary me. I would come sometimes as a friend amongst his fellows. There is much that I desire to learn ere I begin to act. From many sources I have heard that the Casa de Aguilar is a house where the truth can be learned.”

His quick, keen eyes, as he spoke these words, roved in a few comprehensive glances over the group upon the terrace; he seemed to take in the English, the Oriental, the Spanish elements at once. Then his eyes met those of Don Garcia, and as soon as he had made courteous salutation to all the ladies present, he took a few long strides and grasped the hand of his friend.

“You have been wounded. They tell me you have been sick nigh unto death. Have a care of yourself, Don Garcia,

for we cannot spare such soldiers as you in the days that are coming."

"Your Excellency, I am well-nigh fit to bear arms again already. By the time you are able to take the field, I trust I shall be able to march with the best of your soldiers. At least I will make shift to try."

Don Juan made a slight gesture and contortion of the lips and brow which implied a certain disgust.

"I fear you are right, my friend," he said; "for, so far as I can see before me, no rapid action will be possible. The king's policy, as perchance you know, is all on the side of delay. I say not that he may not have right and wisdom on his side. It is for us to obey and not to judge. But for soldiers the task of waiting is harder than any stress of conflict."

Don Rodrigo lifted his brows and looked grave.

"This is the time of year to move rather than to wait, Your Excellency, and the Moriscos on their part seem like to be active enough. Tales come in daily from the Alpuxarras which show that Aben Humeya is establishing his sway with more and more success."

"I know it," answered Don Juan, with a subdued flash of the eyes; "but what can I do? I may not move hand or foot until all matters have been debated in the appointed council; and this council consists of the Marquess of Mondejar, the President Deza, the Archbishop, the Duke of Sesa, the Grand Commander Requesens, and my good friend and foster-father, Don Luis Quixada. Now at this moment the Duke of Sesa is absent from the city, and we

must needs wait for his return ere we can proceed in any way to business; and the grand commander will never be able to be present, as his work all lies at sea, so he must be represented by a substitute. Then, when we in council have reached a conclusion and resolved upon a plan of action, we must send messengers to lay the matter before the king in Madrid and obtain his royal sanction. Wherefore I see no possibility of promptitude; and all that I can do is to fill up this period of waiting by seeking to acquaint myself with the condition of affairs, with the state of parties within and without the city, and with the defences of Granada itself. That is one reason why I am here to-day."

He paused, and his keen glance roved over the groups before him.

"I am told that you have in your household, Don Rodrigo, a Christian maiden who has lived the greater part of her life in the Albaycin; is this so?"

"Your Excellency, it is. Doña Esther Vivar, by birth a Jewess—born of parents converted, one from the Moorish and one from the Jewish faith, to Christianity—by conviction and training a Christian, remained till within a few months since an inmate of her father's house in the Albaycin. She left it because of an attack made upon her and her Christian servant during a time of great unrest. Her father is known as a loyal citizen, and has conformed in all respects to the edicts, though he retains affection and brotherly feelings for those of the Moorish faith."

Don Juan's keen eyes were turned upon the quiet,

beautiful face of Esther, and he asked her a number of trenchant and pertinent questions, which she answered with a readiness, a clearness, and a power of observation and expression which plainly impressed him not a little. He asked about the life of the Albaycin—its traditions, methods, feelings. She gave him truthful answers, whether those answers told against Morisco or Spaniard; and it was evident that her words carried weight.

“I have lately received a deputation of citizens of the Albaycin,” he said, “in which grave charges are brought against the Spanish soldiers quartered there, by which the homes of loyal subjects are polluted, and they themselves suffer great oppression. They claim the king’s protection, and have begged of me to extend it to them. I cannot but believe that they have suffered some wrong; yet there be others who tell me that unless the Albaycin is cleared entirely of its Morisco population, and the professedly loyal Moriscos are drafted into other cities, there will be no safety for Granada.”

“I know,” spoke Don Rodrigo, “that is what the archbishop and the president and their party steadily maintain; but we of the other opinion—the policy of mercy—contend that such a step will inflame the whole district, and if carried to its ultimate end—the expulsion of all Moors from South Spain—will prove a great calamity to the country. Their industry and skill have made the land fruitful and rich; a mild and beneficent form of government would gradually win them over to the Christian faith. We have seen a beginning of this, and but for this disastrous war,

we might have beheld in our lifetime even larger results. The step now proposed will be the deathblow to all conversion. Bitter enmity will ensue. The young and hot-headed will flee to the mountains, to swell the ranks of the rebels; the others will go broken-hearted from their homes and their livings, and will carry with them the tale, which will leave an indelible stain upon Christian government: and never will they seek to increase the wealth and prosperity of a country which can treat them in such a manner."

Don Juan made a sign of assent. He understood the argument well. But he was here to ask questions, not to commit himself to an opinion; and when at last he rose to take his departure, he seemed to have made himself the friend of all.

"I shall hope to come again," he said, looking from one to the other.—"Manriques, I must have speech with you. I would know the story of your adventures, which I have not had time to hear to-day.—Doña Yolante, I would know more of England, and of England's queen, whom some day I hope to see, despite her rejection of His Majesty's claims and His Majesty's advances.—Don Antonio, I may find work for you, and a post about my own person. I desire to surround myself by those who belong less to a faction than to a policy of moderation, and I would have a band of brave soldiers in my train when the time for action comes.—Doña Magdalena, I kiss your hand. I have spent a happy hour in the company of your beautiful bevy of maidens, and in the atmosphere of what in English

is called a 'home.' I shall ask leave to come again—to come and go as a friend. Will you grant me this liberty?"

"Your Excellency does us only too much honour," spoke Doña Magdalena, with a deep reverence. "Our home will be honoured by your presence whenever you condescend to visit it."

He took his leave, attended by Don Rodrigo and his son, and Don Garcia looked at Yolante with kindling eyes.

"What think you of him, señorita? Is he not a very prince amongst men?"

The girl smiled. She had not yet seen enough of the young commander to understand altogether the enthusiasm or personal loyalty and love which he had power to excite in some natures, but she was conscious of some subtle strength and fascination about him, and she could believe that he would make a leader whom men would follow to the death without a thought or a fear.

"In sooth he is a knightly and proper prince," she answered, "and has that gentleness and chivalrous courtesy in which methinks you Spanish callaberos are second to none. May he prove also wise and merciful as he is brave, and perchance we may see the dawn of brighter days in these troubled regions."

It was but a few days later that the Casa de Aguilar was taken by surprise at the sudden appearance of the brothers De Solis, who for some time now had not been seen or heard of in Granada. Some seriously believed that they had abandoned their Spanish comrades, apostatized from their reputed Christianity, and had fled to join

the ranks of Aben Humeya in the mountains. It was, therefore, with some surprise and pleasure that the household and family of Don Rodrigo welcomed them back. They looked bronzed, and somewhat more thin and wiry than of old; but they spoke with all their former friendliness, and told how they had been going to and fro throughout the disturbed districts, sometimes in Morisco, sometimes in Spanish dress, seeking to gather all information as to the state of affairs there, that they might bring back word to Granada, and thus prove of some service to the government there. As they were thus speaking and explaining, a curtain was lifted from behind, and Don Garcia appeared, with another beside him; then as those who saw them would instantly have risen to do reverence to Don Juan—for it was he—he lifted his hand and made an imperative sign for silence, whilst Don Miguel, who was speaking, went on, unconscious of any fresh presence.

“I say that the perils are less than are supposed here. The Moriscos are weary already of the war, save in some few districts where they have had more success. It is their leaders who persuade them to keep the insurrection blazing. They know that for them there will be no mercy; but the people would sooner return to peaceful occupations than remain in arms. If the king’s brother be wise and prudent, he will soon be able to quell all the tumult, and that without overmuch loss of life.”

“And how is that to be effected, señor?” spoke Don Juan from behind, advancing with a bow, and making a sign, which was understood by all, that if this young

man did not already know him by sight, he was not to be enlightened as to his identity.

Don Miguel looked calmly at the newcomer, rising and bowing, but without a gleam of recognition in his eyes. He answered his question freely and fully.

"In this manner, señor, if I mistake me not: by a show of confidence which will impress the Moriscos with the power which has inspired it. Already they are hesitating. They have heard that the king in Madrid is now directing matters; that no longer is it a matter which the surrounding nobles are empowered to deal with. Fear is taking hold upon them. They have been taught lessons of severity by the warrior they call 'the Devil's Iron Head.' They are in fear of what will follow if his counsels prevail with the king. They know that a royal commander has come or is coming, and many there be who would seek to propitiate him without further fighting. Methinks he has but to act with wisdom and confidence and all will be well."

"But what would you have him do?" asked Don Juan again.

"I would have him visit in person the surrounding places in the Alpuxarras," answered Don Miguel. "I would not have him ride thither as a conqueror, with great panoply of arms; but I would have him come as it were in pursuit of pleasure, with a gay company of caballeros, with even some ladies in his train, if any such have courage for the adventure—as though peace were already assured, and he was desirous of showing friendly confidence towards the conquered foe. Of course there must be soldiers posted

along the roads, and at such points where there could possibly be threatening of danger. It is not foolhardiness I desire of the gallant Don Juan, but a show of trust and friendship towards the unfriendly and suspicious Moriscos, upon whom such show would not be lost, and would in all probability produce a most favourable impression. I would begin by gay excursions in the safe and settled Vega of Granada, and then I would extend these pleasant rides farther and farther, till the person and presence of Don Juan was known by all, and the Morisco chiefs were encouraged to approach him in person, and plead their cause and seek his protection."

"You think they would do this?" spoke Don Juan abruptly.

"I am well-nigh certain that they would. They have suffered greatly through the strife betwixt noble and noble in the ranks of their foes. A village makes submission through its chiefs to the Marquess of Mondejar, and obtains from him a safeguard that it shall be left in peace, and shall suffer no ravage from Spanish soldiers. A few months pass by, and down come the soldiers of Los Velez, who refuse to look at the papers shown them, or believe in the submission of the village. They have heard Arabic spoken in the streets—and how shall it not be spoken? can a nation in one year learn a tongue that to some has never been anything but strange?—they see fluttering Moorish robes and veiled women in the streets, and they fall without mercy upon the place, ravaging and pillaging; so that if the Moriscos are not to be slain like sheep in

the shambles, they must needs once again take up arms. This thing has happened again and yet again; it has re-kindled revolt in hundreds of places that long for peace. Let Don Juan show himself. Let the people see his face, and learn that he is supreme, and that all the nobles and generals must obey his behests, and we shall soon have an end of this continual strife. Confidence would inspire confidence. I know the Moriscos, and what I say I believe is truth and wisdom."

"What gives you such knowledge of the Moriscos, señor?" asked Don Juan, with one of his penetrating glances.

"Señor, that question is easily answered," replied Don Miguel, who stole from time to time a glance towards Yolante, as though to ascertain by her sparkling eyes and attitude of attention whether or not he carried her sympathy along with him. "I myself have Moorish blood in my veins. By descent I am more Moor than Spaniard, though I have adopted the dress, faith, and language of that noble race. But ever have we lived, my brother and I, in terms of close intimacy and friendship with our brethren of the infidel belief. There was no reason till the rebellion broke out why there should be two hostile camps in this fair land. Aben Humeya was our friend; Aben Aboo would have been stanch in his good faith to the Spaniard, had not treacherous cruelty forced him to cast in his lot with the man he well-nigh died to save. Spaniards though we be, our hearts have bled for what the Moors have suffered, though we may not deny that they brought it upon themselves by their own ferocity

in the early days of the year. But already they begin to understand that the struggle is hopeless. They are ready to welcome Don Juan as a deliverer from the power of a merciless soldiery. Let him show himself openly amongst them; let him win their confidence and affection—as I believe he can do—and I trow that little by little the war will smoulder out and cease, without any further great effusion of blood. They have expected a man of war, and have trembled; let them see a man of peace, and they will rejoice.”

The brothers did not remain long after this. They both of them answered clearly and succinctly a certain number of pertinent questions put by Don Juan, and then bowed themselves out. They had betrayed no sign of knowing who this stranger guest of Don Rodrigo's was. They were accustomed to meet numbers of new faces in the Casa de Aguilar, and at a time when Granada was full of strangers, such an encounter would not give rise to any remark. Don Juan looked after them with thoughtful eyes as they took their departure.

“What think you of such counsel?” he asked of his hosts, as the curtain fell behind them.

“There may be something in it,” answered Don Rodrigo thoughtfully; “those youths are amongst those who are well known on both sides. If they are to be trusted, they should have good grounds for what they say.”

“Do you distrust them?” was the quick interrogatory.

“By no means. I have known them from boyhood, and have made them welcome at my house. They are

brave, accomplished, rich—have much to recommend them; and, so far as I have heard or seen, they are loyal to the Spanish cause. I would not throw a word of suspicion upon their good faith; I merely know how much Morisco blood runs in their veins, and how often the blood tie has proved stronger than all else when the choice has had to be made.”

“But these young men seem already to have made their choice, and to have cast in their lot with us.”

“Yes, I believe that is so. I have no cause to doubt their good faith. But your safety, Your Excellency, is too precious a thing to be trifled with. We must suffer no risks to be run with regard to your sacred person.”

Don Juan smiled, with a touch of that distaste of the necessity of safeguarding his own person which became later such a burden to him through the king's imperative command. His was the nature that courts danger for its own sake, and loves to be foremost in every post of peril. But he answered, with all courtesy and moderation,—

“I will do nothing to wilfully endanger that. But I fear me we shall have all too much time for pleasure trips and jauntings, pending the answers from Madrid and His Majesty to our council here. It might be no bad method of employing the time to do as yonder callabero suggested. I would fain see something of this fair country—would gladly know more of its inhabitants. It is a matter which we will think of further. I fear me the war will need harsher methods for its repression; but at least about and around fair Granada we might e'en see what pacification the policy of confidence can achieve.”

The brilliant days of late spring and early summer were favourable to the carrying out of the suggested plan. The Vega of Granada was at its loveliest; beyond it, to the north, the gorges in the mountain ranges were clothed in places with exquisite flowers, which enhanced the wonderful beauty of their rugged grandeur. It seemed a fitting pastime for the caballeros, and even the ladies of the city, to ride forth in gay and glittering cabalgadas to various points of interest in the neighbourhood which Don Juan desired to see; and since the stern business of warfare could not be prosecuted till the king had decided what line of policy he would settle upon, and the examination of the forts and walls of the city and the audiences to deputations had already been accomplished by the new commander, he had time to give to these parties of pleasure. And he did not forget that he had other objects in view than those of a mere pleasure-seeker. Often he and his immediate followers, with a guard of soldiers, and oftentimes a few ladies, to give the impression of a pleasure party, would penetrate further than the bulk of the cabalgada cared to proceed, and would enter some Morisco village, and listen to the words of its chief men—Don Miguel or Don Manuel acting as interpreter—till Don Juan felt as though he understood more of the thoughts and ways of these people than ever in his life before, and was the better prepared for what might lie before him in the future.

But the sequel was yet to come. He had yet to learn what Moorish treachery could be like.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE HANDS OF THE MOORS.

ESTHER and Yolante were riding side by side through a magnificent mountain gorge. Behind them were a few soldiers, laughing and chatting together as they pursued their way; and yet farther behind came the larger cavalcade surrounding Don Juan and those gentlemen who formed his bodyguard, all of whom had lingered awhile to view some deserted fortification of Moorish construction which they had come upon shortly after quitting the township of Durcal.

This was not one of those pleasure parties merely of which mention has been made in the last chapter. It was rather an extension of the same project. Don Juan was weary of inactivity within the walls of Granada, and as he grew accustomed to the life of the district, he had begun to extend his rides further and further, till those of the citizens and their wives and daughters who had in the first instance delighted to join in the pleasure expeditions had gradually grown weary of them, and preferred to remain at home.

But Don Juan was only the more stimulated by the

things he saw and heard to make further investigations for himself, and it was his great desire to visit a few of the neighbouring places which had been scenes of strife and battle; and there were many who were eager to follow his example, not only amongst the caballeros, but even amongst the maids and matrons of Granada.

It was thought prudent and politic to give these excursions the air of holiday-making rather than of serious visits of inspection, which might be regarded as having political or military significance. When, therefore, the Marchioness of Mondejar, with her daughter and one or two other high-born ladies, desired to accompany their spouses upon this ride through Padul to Durcal, and then back to Granada by Dilar and Zubia, no objection was raised; for the country in these immediate environs was reported quiet, and a well-mounted party could do the whole distance in a few days.

Yolante was wild to go, and Esther to the full as anxious. Her father had been engaged to accompany the party as interpreter, in the event of falling in with Morisco chiefs desirous of speech with Don Juan. Don Rodrigo, together with his son, Eudo, and a following of retainers, would accompany the party; and it needed no very great amount of pleading and coaxing upon Yolante's part to gain her permission to come also, with Esther as her companion.

"I do so long to know more of this beautiful country!" she had said. "Everything I hear rouses my curiosity, and I have scarce been a half day's ride from Granada all

these months. Don Miguel has told such wonderful stories of the wonders of the beautiful country all around, I long to see it with my own eyes. If the marchioness and her ladies are going, why not Esther and I? Are we not stronger and more active than they?"

So the girls had won their way. They did not know how much of their desire to see these things was due to the carefully-instilled hints and persuasions of the brothers De Solis. It was more to Yolante than to Esther that these words had been spoken—one here, one there—not with any appearance of set purpose, but each one carefully timed with a deliberate intent. It was not hard to stir within the breast of the English-bred girl a desire for adventure, for exploration, even for peril of a kind.

"I hope we may meet with some adventure, Esther," she had cried gaily, more than once, as they rode along in the glamour of the splendid southern sunshine; and Esther had answered, with a smile, that all adventures were not to be desired. Yet she felt no fear. They were well attended; the roads were well guarded; the country was quiet; and though from time to time they caught sight on the hill-tops of the white turbans or fluttering robes of Turk or Moor, there was no menace, no hint of peril, and already the party was about to wend its way northwards again.

Esther and Yolante had, up to this moment, seldom been each without her special cavalier at her side. It was one of their complaints to one another at night, sometimes, that they had scarcely had a word with each other by day. Eudo, Antonio, Don Garcia (now fully recovered),

Don Pedro of the wooden leg, Don Luis de Marmol, the keen observer and describer—all these and many others were eager for the post of special protector of one or other of the ladies, to say nothing of the brothers De Solis, who, without being exactly of the company, acted as free-lances on their behalf, scouting all over the roads and gorges in advance, and bringing word of the exact state of affairs in every village or cluster of dwellings that they passed.

This was almost the first time the girls had had a chance to ride together for any length of time; and though Yolante was vaguely aware that much of the glamour of the wonderful journey was due to the fact that Don Garcia had generally posted himself at her bridle rein, and constituted himself her especial caballero, yet she was not averse to giving him and the other gentlemen the slip on this exhilarating morning, when the deserted Morisco fortalice had arrested the attention of Don Juan and all the military spirits about him. For she had been told of a wonderful well that they must needs pass upon the road they were traversing, and Don Miguel had assured her that it possessed magic properties, and that if maidens would only come thither alone and unattended and seek its aid, it would reveal to them the secrets of the future—revealed in its shining depths. But the spell would never work if the maiden were attended by any person of the opposite sex.

Yolante had laughed gaily, telling Don Miguel that she had no faith in what the English called old wives' fables, and that she had no desire to pry into the secrets of the

future ; the present was enough for her. Nevertheless, his description of the well itself, which he said was draped with moss and ferns, and set in the heart of one of the most beautiful mountain gorges, fired her imagination, and now she was pushing forward at a rapid trot, saying laughingly to Esther the while,—

“After all we shall see this magic well alone, before the caballeros come up to break the spell.”

“Yes, but we will wait there for them ; we must not ride too far ahead,” answered Esther, with a smile. “We are not, alas, in your peaceful country, Yolante, and our joy in nature must not lead us into rashness.”

“Ah no ; but the rest are close at hand, and all is peace and stillness, and we have those faithful fellows behind. I love to get away into the heart of the hills like this, and see Dame Nature face to face. Ah, what a joy it is to be alive and young, with all that life has to offer before one spreading out like the promised land at one’s feet ! Esther, do you know—do you feel—do you understand ? Sometimes I feel as though my heart would burst for very joy, just with a pure happiness of living. Yet why should that be ? For the world is full of trouble, and we ourselves live in the midst of it. Can such gladness of heart be right ?”

Esther smiled at the bright and earnest face of the girl, and asked a gentle question,—

“Do you not know wherefore you are so happy, sweet Yolante ?”

“Do you know ?” questioned the girl, with kindling eyes.

"Verily I think I do. It is that you do love, and that he who has won your heart is worthy of its best love, and that his heart is yours as truly as yours is his. Have I not seen and guessed aright, Yolante? Is it not thus with you and Don Garcia?"

The crimson had flamed in Yolante's face; her eyes were bright like stars; her breath came and went between her parted lips.

"O Esther, Esther, is it so? I had not dared to think it. Don Garcia! the knightliest, the noblest, the bravest, the gentlest! But how can it be that he should care for me? There is scarce a high-born maiden in all Granada who would not be proud to win such a heart as that. Oh, how can I believe it?"

"How can you choose but believe, sweet Yolante? Tell me, has he eyes for any other when you are by?"

"Ah! you must not seek to make me vain. He is kind, he is chivalrous. He knows that I am a stranger in his land, and he has known and loved mine. That has made a tie from the first. It is enough to make one wish to try the spell of the magic well!" And Yolante broke into a laugh of mingled happiness and confusion. "O Esther, let us push on, let us push on! we must be close to it now. See that narrowing pathway and those overhanging rocks. Surely that will lead us to the place."

They had ridden faster than they knew as they talked; now they were in the wildest part of the gorge, and the thunder of the torrent was in their ears. The sunshine was blotted out by masses of overhanging rock; all was

wild and grand beyond description. But Esther shivered with a chill that was not due alone to the dark shadows of the rocks.

“Stop, Yolante; let us wait here for our guard. They cannot be far behind. It may not be wise to press forward into these wild ravines alone. Hark! what is that?”

Yolante had just opened her lips to protest, when she too heard the sound—a wild chorus of shouts and yells—a sound which caused Esther to grasp her companion by the arm, whilst her face blanched to a deadly whiteness, and even their horses snorted and shivered as though with affright.

“It is the Morisco war-cry!” she whispered beneath her breath. “They have fallen upon our guard. Doubtless they are hewing them in pieces. They would not have attacked had they not been the stronger force.”

“Let us fly! let us fly!” cried Yolante, a panic of terror falling upon her.

Nor was this terror strange. It was not fear for life alone. Had she been a man she would have flung herself into the fight without a qualm or a second thought. It was the awful fear of falling into the hands of the Moors that was upon her. She had heard tales—at the very thought of them her blood ran cold. She grasped Esther by the hand, and pointed down into the yawning abyss beneath.

“Esther, if they come, let us—fling ourselves down! Anything better than that!”

But upon Esther’s face a great calm had settled. She

drew Yolante towards her with a tender, sheltering gesture.

“Nay, rather let us trust in God and His never-failing mercies. We are His children. With Him is the power. Let us not do that which He has condemned, but let us throw ourselves upon His fatherly care and mercy, trusting in Him through all, and He will not fail us nor forsake us. We are His children; He will save.”

At that moment, almost before the last words were spoken, a wild yell burst upon them from behind, and immediately a body of Morisco horsemen, brandishing blood-stained weapons, appeared racing down the gorge, uttering shouts of triumph as they saw the two maidens standing side by side, and clinging together as though for protection. The very horses the girls rode seemed to share the fears of their riders, and had got as close together as they could, so that Esther's arm could encircle Yolante's waist as they stood beneath the shelter of the overhanging rocks. Had they been men and armed, they might have made a stand here, and have either sold their lives dear, or held the foe at bay till their comrades came up to their assistance. But what could two helpless girls do?

With shouts of triumph the Moriscos rushed down upon them; the next instant they seemed to be encircled by a living whirlwind. The wild mountain horsemen had surrounded them, were sweeping them along at a breakneck pace, uttering terrific shouts and yells as they did so, and calling aloud on Allah and his prophet.

It was like some horrible dream to Yolante, as she saw

in a flash the magic well of which she had thought so much. There it stood in all its beauty and verdure, set in the midst of scenery of unparalleled majesty and beauty. And here was she, between two wild, dusky horsemen, riding she knew not whither at frantic speed, helpless, breathless, terror-stricken—trying to cry aloud upon God, trying to pray for deliverance, trying to keep fast hold upon her faith, yet conscious of an unspeakable and overwhelming horror that seemed to encircle her and almost press the life out of her. She tried to look behind her, in the sick hope that their friends were on their track; but it was a hope that grew fainter and fainter as she marked the intricate paths through the hills taken by their dusky guides, and the headlong pace at which they travelled. How could any body of pursuers, having to track their steps the whole way through a country strange to them, hope to ride at such a pace? And these sons of the hills seemed to require neither rest nor food, but sped on like a whirlwind hour after hour, till Yolante was ready to drop from her saddle with fatigue, and almost lost her sense of fear and horror in one of absolute physical exhaustion.

Then darkness came, and with it a sudden halt. Yolante, who had been either half asleep or half unconscious, found herself set upon the ground by her captors, and the next moment Esther's arms were about her, and she was sobbing as though her heart would break, in the embrace of one who, in spite of all she had passed through, seemed calm, and strong, and self-possessed.

“Have courage, dear one, have courage. We are to stop

here for the night. The horses can go no further, and all want rest and food. Yolante, I have heard somewhat, though not much, but enough to assure me that no violence and no hurt is meant us, at least for the present. There is some purpose in our capture; that I can see. These men are acting under instructions. They have not laid hands upon us for themselves, nor to sell us to slavery. What their plan is I know not. It may be that we are to be held as hostages, in which case we may be safe. At least we have no fear of violence from these men. God has protected us so far, and we must trust Him to the end. You must eat, Yolante, when they bring us food, and we must seek to keep up our strength both of body and spirit. We know not yet what lies before us, but we must be ready for whatever may befall."

A rude tent was fashioned for the captives by the Moriscos, who seemed desirous of making them as comfortable as circumstances would permit, and who gave them abundance of not ill-cooked food to eat, and a flask of wine to drink. Yolante turned away in disgust at first, being too much exhausted to desire food; but Esther fed her with bread soaked in wine, and after a short while appetite returned, and she made a good repast, and was almost instantly asleep, with her head upon Esther's lap.

But Esther could not sleep; nor did she think it wise that both should do so. She leaned back against the pile of saddles and watched the stars come out in the sky, absorbed in voiceless prayer to the Lord of heaven and earth. She saw their Moorish captors stretch themselves out for

repose, one always being left to watch narrowly the actions of the prisoners, so that any attempt to escape would be hopeless, even had Esther had the least idea of their whereabouts, which she had not. She knew they must have travelled very far, and she guessed by the position of the sun that they were going in a southerly direction; and of late the character of the country had been less mountainous, and they were at this present moment in a smiling valley, warm and sheltered, so that the night air was not piercing or cold. Beyond that she could tell nothing, and sat hour after hour looking at the stars and the wonderful effects of moonlight, till, as she fancied the dawn could not be far distant, she became aware of certain stealthy footsteps approaching their camp; and she sat up motionless and alert in a moment, her heart beating almost to suffocation. Could this be the arrival of help already?

The moon, which had been obscured for a while, suddenly shone out. She almost gave a scream as it did so. For there was the sentry in the clutch of some powerful adversary, and ere the man could utter a cry he was either gagged or slain, she could not tell which; but he fell helpless to the ground, unable to do anything to arouse his sleeping comrades.

The next instant two stalwart figures were lifting up the stiffened figures of the captives, and Esther was gazing with great astonishment and relief into the face of Don Manuel de Solis.

"Come," he whispered; "there is not a moment to lose. We must be off and away before these fellows awake.

Would we could slay them all as they sleep! But that would be too great risk. Come, ladies; lean upon our strong arms. We have horses, fresh and unwearied, standing in yonder knoll of trees. Ere day dawn we shall be miles away. Then let yonder fellows do their worst! Their wearied horses will have much ado to catch up with ours; and if they come, we shall be ready!"

Yolante, awakened from the deep sleep of exhaustion, felt as though she had changed one dream for another, when she felt herself lifted to the saddle, and galloping away in the moonlit darkness of the misty valley with Don Miguel as her companion. Just in front rode Don Manuel with Esther, and behind followed some half-dozen mounted servants. The revulsion of feeling was so great that she did not at once clearly perceive what had happened, and only when dawn was breaking did she fully realize the fact of their rescue; and looking up into the earnest, swarthy face that was turned towards her, she said,—

"Señor Don Miguel, have you rescued us indeed out of the hands of the Moriscos? How can we thank you enough?"

"There is a way, señorita; of that we will speak later," he said; and the look in his eyes half frightened Yolante, though her heart was full of blessed relief. "But fear not; you are safe. None shall dare to harm you now. You are mine, and I will stand between you and all peril—yea, even to the last drop of my blood!"

"Ah! I trust that will not be needful. Surely we have distanced all pursuit. And soon we shall meet the band

of those who must ere this be riding upon our tracks. O señor, say! how long will it be ere we shall reach Don Juan and his following, from whose company we have been reft?"

"Ah, lady, we cannot take that northward route. Already word has been passed that the Christians are at hand, and the men of the mountains are in arms. Don Juan cannot follow you hither. We must not seek yet to rejoin him. But there is a place of safety not far from hence, where we will carry you, and where you will be safe from all hurt and molestation. Trust to us. We know the country, and we know the Moriscos too. Has not this knowledge brought us to your aid at a time of greatest peril? Will it not serve us to hide you in safety, and to restore you to your friends at last? Have no fear. All will be well; not a finger shall be laid upon you. And Don Juan shall know that you are safe, and that we will conduct you to Granada the first moment that the journey may be made in safety. But know you not that all that headlong ride of yesterday was taken through the heart of the enemy's country? We can pass through it at will, in the Moorish dress and under Moorish names; but for you it would be fraught with too many perils. Yet have no fear; have only patience, and all will be well at last."

Yolante felt a strange sinking at heart, which in vain she strove to combat. Was she not safe under the care of one who had been friend and guest at her uncle's house, and of whom she had heard nothing but good? Had these

brothers not rescued them at their own risk from a fate she dared not speculate too much upon? And if they were now too far from Granada to return direct thither through hostile country, why should she be afraid and dispirited? Was this not all part and parcel of one of those adventures which she had longed for so often?

Thus arguing with herself, she plucked up courage, choked back a sob as she thought of Eudo, Doña Magdalena, Don Garcia; then felt with a curious heart-throb that surely rescue would not be long in coming to her. Those in Granada would find a way of bringing her back to their midst. Surely she need not lose heart and courage. So she strove after cheerfulness, and talked with her companion as gaily as she could, and strove not to permit dismay to be seen in her face when, after a brief halt at a village where their guides seemed to be known, both they and their servants, after a brief disappearance, came back garbed in the dress of the Moriscos—the brothers De Solis looking so strangely at home in it that for the first few moments the girls did not recognize them, and shrank back at their approach.

“It is safer so, lady, believe me,” spoke Don Miguel, as he lifted Yolante to her saddle. “We have a task before us that is fraught with difficulty and danger. But garbed thus, and seemingly bringing with us Christian prisoners, we shall be safe from suspicion, and so will you. Remember we are now in the heart of the enemy’s country. It behoves us to walk warily.”

“Where are we going?” asked Yolante, as the shades

of evening began to fall, and she found that they were in wild, mountainous country again, ascending a steep track that led ever upwards and upwards towards frowning heights above. She had been very silent since that strange change in her companion's attire had seemed so completely to change his identity. A kind of cold fear was stealing over her. She remembered words which had been spoken in her hearing about these brothers, and the doubts then expressed as to which side they would take in the struggle that now convulsed the land. She knew, of course, that they might be acting in perfect good faith towards them, but there was just the possibility that they had other thoughts in their minds.

"Yonder fortress is our destination," spoke Don Miguel gently. He too had been silent, not striving to force his attentions upon the weary girl. "A little more courage and patience, señorita, and you will find rest and safety at last."

But so worn out and weary was Yolante that she was scarce conscious as they passed the frowning portals of some great gateway, where Morisco sentries paced to and fro, and strange voices gave challenge in a tongue which by this time she knew to be Arabic. She shuddered as she passed through the gate and heard it clang behind her, and when able to slip from her saddle she evaded Don Miguel's aid, and crept up towards Esther, whose arm was at once thrown protectingly round her.

"Oh, where are they taking us?" she asked, in a frightened whisper, as they were guided through long, strange,

echoing corridors and galleries. "Methinks it is in prison we shall find ourselves at last!"

Esther said nothing, only held her close; and their conductors, with a smile, at last flung back a door from whence issued a stream of warm golden light, and a joyous cry broke from the lips of some person within the brilliantly-lighted room.

"Esther, Esther! my own Esther! They did say they would bring you, but I believed them not. Now my eyes are gladdened by the sight of you. Welcome, welcome, sweet sister, to the fortress of Frigiliana. Ah! now it will be like home indeed."

It was the beautiful Zareefa who flung herself into Esther's arms in speaking thus; and Yolante, who rubbed her eyes, looked about, and rubbed them again, felt as though she had indeed stepped into the middle of some wonderful magic palace. Here in this gloomy fortress was an oasis of warmth, and brightness, and beauty—flowers, perfumes, rich draperies, and delicate food; and in the midst of all this the fairy-like Zareefa with her soft words of welcome, whilst from the divan against the walls rose slowly the dark-eyed and queenly Ayesha, whom Yolante had last seen in Ben Abner's house. She advanced towards her smiling and with a mother-like gesture, so that the girl forgot all else than that she was a woman and a mother, and fell weeping upon her neck.

"Poor child, poor child! you have been affrighted, I doubt not—frightened, and weary, and hungry from the long journey. But all your troubles will be over now.

You are here beneath my care and protection, and here you will remain till your husbands come to claim you."

"Husbands!" cried Yolante in amaze, recoiling a little, and gazing into the fathomless dark eyes of the beautiful Morisco.

"Ah yes, you are Christian; you do not fully understand. But it will all be right. You will soon see. Esther is Christian also, but she understands better. Hassan and Murad—you know them by other names, but here they are called thus—will make all plain soon. They have loved you long and well. Now they have won you by the might and prowess of their good right arms. Soon you will give them their reward, and learn happiness as the wives of brave warriors."

Yolante gazed, her face growing white and rigid. Half understanding, and wholly overcome by horror and exhaustion, she sank slowly to the ground, and lost all consciousness.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FORTRESS OF FRIGILIANA.

HORROR, fury, and dismay reigned in the ranks of Don Juan's little band when a mounted messenger came galloping back with the news that the Moriscos were posted in force on the road and on the heights above, that a small band of their comrades had been cut to pieces, and that two beautiful and fearless girls—Esther and Yolante—had been carried off captive by another well-mounted band of Moriscos.

For a moment they could not and would not believe that such a thing was possible; but doubt was too soon changed into terrible certainty. One of their own men, terribly hacked and wounded, but living and conscious, was borne back by his fellows from the blood-stained spot upon the road where the Morisco ambush had set upon them, and he testified to having seen the girls hurried away by a band of the enemy; whilst a captive Morisco freely admitted that such was the case, and added that he had heard the captives were to be taken with all possible speed to the fortress of Frigiliana, recently captured by the bold Morisco chief El Zagri.

"Frigiliana!" echoed Eudo, whose boyish face was white with tense emotion. "I have heard that name before."

"It is the place whither my wife and daughter were taken by my kinsman by marriage, El Zagri," spoke Esther's father, who, with a composed but very pale and drawn face, had been acting as interrogator and interpreter during the examination of the Morisco prisoner. "Pray Heaven that they may indeed arrive thither without hurt! for Aysha, my wife, loves Esther, and will protect both maidens from hurt. But it is a long and toilsome march to that grim fortress, and they say the Moors are posted in force to oppose the advance of our party. The village of Las Albuñuelas, which we thought to be loyal, is, it seems, a hotbed of revolt. Your Excellency, it will be needful for you to return speedily to Granada with your small force, else you may be in danger of falling into grave peril; and not only shall we lose a few of our soldiers and these two maidens, but the whole of the cabalgada will be cut to pieces: and what will His Majesty say?"

Don Garcia, Antonio, and some half-dozen other caballeros here sprang forward and proffered their petition,—

"Your Excellency, what Señor Vivar speaks is truth; your sacred person must not be exposed to danger. His Majesty would never forgive it if hurt happened to you through any such thing. But whilst you fall back with the bulk of the escort and the ladies upon Padul, and thence to Granada, suffer us, with a few picked followers,

to pursue and overtake these infidels, who have dared to carry off Christian maidens from beneath the very face of Your Excellency. Grant unto us the liberty to pursue and overtake! Rather would we die in the attempt than fail to make it."

They were palpitating with excitement, these gallant caballeros. Don Garcia's majestic figure was drawn to its full height; his blue Viking eyes flashed fire. Antonio's dark face was flushed a dusky red; his hand gripped his sword-hilt till the knuckles were white. Eudo was shaken with the passion of his emotion; and Don Luis de Marmol, Don Pedro de Vilches, and the other caballeros who had silently ranged themselves beside their friends, all showed by the set resolve of their stern faces that they were possessed by the same spirit of vengeance.

Don Juan looked from one to the other; his face was very stern and thoughtful. He knew that for himself the thing was impossible; though he asked nothing better than to lead so bold and resolute a band up to the very walls of the Moorish fortress, and demand the surrender of the kidnapped maidens. But he was soldier enough to know that Frigiliana was not to be thus taken. He knew that it was a place of immense strength, which had only fallen through careless inadvertence and false security into the hands of the Moriscos. They had already repulsed one attack there, and were strengthening its defences might and main. To retake it would be no easy achievement; and the attack must needs be made in force, and planned with skill and address. Granada was a far

cry to Frigiliana—too far for a base of military operations. But there was another alternative, and though to adopt it would be to put the honour and glory of the achievement into the hands of another, Don Juan was too good a soldier and too true a patriot to hesitate when the welfare of the cause was at stake.

“Gentlemen,” he said, speaking calmly and firmly, “if I were, as you are, under no stern obligation and responsibility to His Majesty, right gladly would I place myself at your head and ride forward to Frigiliana, calling upon all loyal Christians and subjects by the way to join us. But that may not be. Granada is my post, and to Granada I must return with all speed. Nor can I grant unto you, my friends, altogether the thing you ask of me.”

He paused, and the faces of the caballeros were tense and grave; but they waited with patience for what was to come.

“To seek to follow and rescue these maidens were idle—a sheer flinging away of your own lives, without bringing help to them. These mountain gorges are full of bands of lurking foes; a small company seeking to track the fugitives would be hemmed in and cut to pieces ere a score of miles were passed. My friends, we must act with wisdom, and not be guided only by the hot impulse of our hearts. Wherefore this plot has been made to carry away these ladies I know not; but even the father of Doña Esther believes that they will be taken safely to the fortress, where his wife will have them under her keeping.

Wherefore we need not fear the worst. There is more in this than we know, and it behoves us to act with celerity and power, but not to fling away our lives in that which will be fruitless of result."

"What, then, may we do, Your Excellency?" cried Don Garcia, in a voice which shook with the intensity of his feeling. "You will not bid us return to Granada without striking a blow against the infidel for the rescue of these ladies?"

A smile played over Don Juan's face. He turned to his secretary, and asked for pen and parchment. When these were brought, he wrote for a while in silence, and then sealed his missive with his own private signet. This done, he delivered the paper into the hands of Don Garcia.

"This letter is addressed to the Grand Commander Requesens, who lies with the fleet off Velez Malaga, awaiting orders from Madrid ere he ventures to act. I have taken it upon myself to advise a forward movement on his part, and an assault of the fortress of Frigiliana—a matter I know to be near the heart of the Corregidor of Velez, with whom I have already corresponded. I believe ere this messengers will be on the way from His Majesty with the needful powers. I take this much upon myself, that I counsel immediate action. To you, Don Garcia, and my other bold friends, I entrust this mission. Seek not the mountain route to Frigiliana; it will but entangle you to your own undoing. Take with you a few faithful native guides, and proceed instantly to the coast. Bear my letter to the grand commander, and place yourselves

beneath his command. I have told him he can rely on you as brave soldiers seasoned to war. Thus will you quickly be on the march to the fortress where the captive ladies are to be taken, and then you will appear before its walls with a mighty following, able to bring help and release. To go in other fashion would but add to the list of Christian losses and Morisco triumphs, and I have no wish to fling away the lives of my brave friends and comrades."

They prostrated themselves before him and kissed his hand. They knew that he had judged wisely and well. Anything save inaction or retreat was tolerable to them; and quickly were they all in the saddle, and with a few picked followers, making in all about a score of armed men, with Señor Vivar as their guide—for he knew every road and bypath of the country, and spoke every language and dialect of Spaniard or Morisco—they started forth upon the ride to Velez Malaga.

* * * * *

The glorious moonlight of a southern night was pouring down upon the grand mass of rock and crag upon which was built the mighty fortress of Frigiliana. Perched upon the final spur of the Sierra Benitomitz, beneath which the streams of the Chillar and Loutin mingle their waters, it rears its proud head high above the surrounding hills, and can only be approached by winding and difficult paths, overlooked in many places by the frowning walls of the castle, and in others by platforms specially made for purposes of defence, from whence huge boulders could

easily be rolled down upon the heads of any advancing force. The top of the rock, being spacious and level, was capable of sheltering the whole population of the adjacent district. The castle walls were of immense thickness, and seemed to defend the whole plateau. To the eyes of a small band of caballeros, creeping from rock to rock and from shrub to shrub, it seemed indeed as though the place were impregnable to assault and inaccessible to approach.

There had been six silent, ghost-like figures advancing at the first, but the party had now divided. Three were creeping upwards by one narrow pathway, and three by another. This latter three had selected as their route a peculiar narrow ridge bearing the significant name of the Cuchillo (knife), where, between two huge crags, which at a short distance looked like one mass of rock, a very narrow pathway ran, which was so rugged and so steep that it seemed in many places as though nothing but the foot of a goat could scale it.

But in spite of all difficulties the three agile figures forced an upward track, till at last their way was barred by an immense mass of rock, which had apparently been brought hither by human hands to effectually block any attempt at approach by this natural gully.

Upon reaching this obstacle the three men paused, and wiped their heated brows, as they looked keenly this way and that, speaking in low and subdued tones: for who could tell how near the sentries might be, or how sound would carry along these precipitous, rocky terraces?

“This must be the place of which the corregidor

spoke," said Don Garcia, looking keenly about him—"the narrow slit betwixt rocky ledges, leading up well-nigh to the foundations of the castle walls. But methinks this block of rock and earth has been thrown down here since he knew the fortress. It would be no easy task to scale it; yet men have done harder things ere now. If they trust to their stout barrier rather than to their own powers of defence, it might be here that entrance could be found."

"Ay," answered Antonio, in very cautious tones; "and if the fortress were to be approached, as is spoken of, by four different routes, and the garrison all on the alert against the foe that they can see, might not we, with a band of picked men, strong of heart and agile of foot, climb up hither unnoticed and unknown, and see if we could not take the garrison unawares, whilst they were engaged with our comrades at other points?"

"I trow it might be done," said Don Garcia, whose face in the moonlight looked somewhat haggard and worn. And, indeed, these days and weeks of preparation had been terribly anxious ones for all three young men, and hard indeed had it been to possess their souls in needful patience whilst the commanders took counsel together, and disposed their forces to the best advantage for the attack upon the Moorish stronghold. There was no needless delay. Requesens and his men had been chafing for months at their enforced inactivity; the Corregidor of Velez, who had collected a fine force of over two thousand picked men, foot and horse, was equally insistent

that no more time should be lost; and, best of all, a messenger from Madrid arrived only five days after Don Juan's messengers had set the ball rolling, with permission from the king to commence hostile operations: and now all was in train for the opening of the campaign. But the time had seemed long indeed to the caballeros who were so deeply interested in the fate of the captives of Frigiliana. They had spent days cautiously surveying the strength of the place; for many nights they had approached as near as they dared, to ascertain for themselves what manner of fortress it was, and how it might best be approached. And now they had ventured nearer than ever: for they had hit upon the rocky crevice of which they had heard, but had not been able to find hitherto; and they knew that they were underneath the very walls of the fortress, almost within speaking distance of its sentries and inmates. Therefore they spoke with bated breath, and gazed about them with eyes full of deepest curiosity and hawk-like keenness.

A slight sound, and the murmur of voices close at hand, caused them to start and gaze about them with breathless curiosity.

"Where is Eudo?" whispered Don Garcia. "He was with us just now. Whither can he have vanished?"

"That is his voice," answered Antonio. "And hark! are not those silvery tones those of a maiden? Whence come they, and with whom can he be speaking? Sure I have heard that voice before!"

Guided by the hushed tones of the unseen speakers,

the two caballeros crept along the knife-like ledge in a downward direction, and then clambered like goats over some rude natural steps which caught their eye in a gleam of moonlight, and the next moment they came in sight of two figures, and stopped short with a start of astonishment. The one speaker was Eudo, the other the fairy-like Moorish maiden Zareefa.

The girl saw them instantly, and made as though she would spring away like a frightened fawn; but Eudo seemed to hold her back with a persuasive gesture, and they heard him say,—

“Fear not, gentle Zareefa; these are my gallant comrades of whom I spoke. They are come to rescue yonder captives from the hands of the Moriscos. I pray you stay and tell to them what you have told to me. They are hungry for news of our dear ones, as I was myself. Tell them all again.”

She stood in the moonlight like a spirit of the mist, her dark hair glistening with dewdrops, her eyes shining like stars—her diaphanous white robes, from which the dark concealing cloak had fallen away, seeming to gleam with ghost-like lustre. She made a graceful gesture with her small hands, and spoke in silvery tones.

“Señors, I knew that you would come; my heart did tell me so. I have been waiting and watching. I knew I should not watch in vain. Yes, señors, the ladies you love are safe—safe for the moment; but not safe for too long, if rescue do not come. Ah! we have had already a somewhat hard task, for their lovers are ardent. They

thought to win them by their subtle device, but they are too fierce, too headstrong, too impetuous to play their part as they should. Esther knows them, and quickly saw through the artifice used. Gratitude was turned to horror and loathing. Neither she nor the English girl has sought to mask her disdain, and now it is open warfare between them. But for my mother, and her influence with my grandfather, Allah alone doth know what might have befallen them ere now!"

"But they are safe!" burst out Don Garcia impetuously.

"Yes, señor, they are safe, and in my mother's keeping. But I fear the fierce counsels of Hassan and Murad will prevail ere long, if help come not from without. The plot, señor? ah! it is easily told. The brethren we call Hassan and Murad Yahye, and you De Solis, have planned it all. It was they who contrived those parties from Granada which led step by step—as they hoped—to the longer expeditions. They waited and watched. They knew the country and their countrymen. They are Morisco to the heart's core, and have no small following with their brethren. They planned the attack; they roused the mountain district, so as to render rescue impossible. They effected that rescue themselves, coming as Spanish caballeros to the aid of the captive maidens. When Esther and Yolante arrived at Frigiliana, they scarce knew what to think. Already doubts had penetrated their souls; but three days later, when Hassan and Murad presented themselves before them as suitors for their hands, then the veil was altogether torn from their eyes. They recoiled

from them in horror. It has been war to the knife ever since."

Don Garcia gripped hard the hilt of his sword; his eyes in the moonlight gleamed fiercely. Antonio was white to the lips.

"You mean that Don Miguel and Don Manuel have dared to approach these ladies as lovers, whilst at the same time throwing off all allegiance to His Majesty and openly throwing in their lot with the rebels? Your pardon, gentle maiden, if I have hurt you by these words, but you will understand—"

"Ah yes, señors, I understand full well, and at heart I am with the Christian cause, though in some sort more Moorish than Spanish myself. I would not wed one of those brothers—so fierce, so full of hatred to the Christians, so bent upon their own way. They call it love, but it is not such love as I would have. I trow well that Esther and Yolante would sooner die than wed with such wild, untamed natures. But ofttimes I tremble for them; for what can helpless maidens do when in the power of such men as these? They will woo for a while in Western fashion, perchance; but when weary of that, they will turn tyrant captor, and carry off their wives by force, as men of the East so often do. Who then could save them?"

"We have come to do that," cried Don Garcia. "Do they not know yet at Frigiliana that the armies of His Majesty are marching upon them?"

"Oh yes, they know—and laugh them to scorn. Yet it

keeps them busily employed with their fortifications, and thus respite has come to the captives. They are closely watched and guarded. They are not suffered to go forth from my mother's apartments. She can only prevail to keep them ever with her, under lock and key; and if the brothers had had their way, they would have been taken ere now from her keeping. But my grandfather is master of the fortress, and her word with him has prevailed as yet over that of Hassan and Murad. Just now all are engrossed with thoughts of the coming attack; but let that once be ended, and Frigiliana remain in the hands of the Moors, and methinks nothing can avail to save the captive maidens from a terrible fate: for the whole garrison will be incensed against them, and I fear me that no efforts of my mother will avail them then."

"And you have come out, maiden, to tell us this?" spoke Antonio, as Don Garcia was sternly silent.

"I have watched yonder approaching host by night and day. I have wandered hither and thither whenever I could make good my escape, seeking vainly for some brave knight to whom I might give my message. My heart did tell me that I should not seek in vain. I knew that yonder gentle maidens had many bold caballeros who would strain every nerve and muscle to find and rescue them. From Hassan and Murad I have learned that they had gallant lovers—by them accounted rivals. If they had adventured so much in the scheme of capture, would not Spanish caballeros adventure more to save them from a terrible doom?"

"Lady, you did judge aright," spoke Don Garcia hoarsely. "May the day come when we shall find the way to reward you for your devotion. Whatever betides the fortress of Frigiliana, the maiden Zareefa and her mother shall be safe from all harm. I pledge my knightly word upon it." And as he spoke he unsheathed his sword, which flashed silver in the moonlight.

"I thank you, señor," spoke Zareefa, with a little inclination of the head; and the next instant she had with a quick motion enveloped herself in the folds of her dark mantle, and seemed to vanish from before their eyes.

* * * * *

Night had come once more—a darker and more terrible night; for storm clouds had gathered in the sky, and the light of the moon was obscured. But though silence as yet reigned around and about the grim fortress of Frigiliana, there was no sleep for those within or without its walls. The garrison was alert, expecting speedy attack; and the assailing force was already on its way, approaching the rocky fastness from four different quarters, whilst a fifth small detachment of picked men under Don Garcia was to crawl up the ravine of the Cuchillo of Conca, and, when the full tide of the fight should be raging on all sides, strive to effect an entrance by that approach which seemed to have been left unguarded by the Moriscos, save for the great mass of rock and stone which effectually barred all passage.

Don Garcia had not spent his nights there in vain. Already he and Eudo and Antonio had made sure of

certain footholds over the rocky barrier; already they had made out the hidden and secret aperture, so cleverly concealed, where Zareefa had disappeared. It looked at first scarce wide enough to admit anything larger than the girl's slight form; but the soldiers had worked cautiously at the hole, and now it could easily be struggled through by a burly man. They knew that this aperture gave entrance to the precincts of the stronghold. How fast beat their hearts as they lay concealed in the dark gully, awaiting the moment when their strategical assault should be made!

They knew that beneath the *corregidor* had a large force mustered, which might even now be creeping upwards through the narrow defile. Already they knew that the four detachments must be converging upon Frigiliana, and they strained their ears for the sound of the booming gun, which was to fire from headquarters, at the order of the grand commander, as the signal for simultaneous attack.

But suddenly, before the gun boomed forth its signal, the whole mountain seemed alive with terrible sounds. Huge rocks were heard to go crashing and dashing down the mountain side; the rattle of musketry, the whistling of darts and arrows, the yell of infidel warriors, the answering "Santiagos" of Spanish soldiers and knights, suddenly filled the silent night with a hideous and awful din. The attack had commenced. The Moriscos had discovered the approach of the foe; and now the gun boomed forth from the direction of the camp, and instantly the whole of the

rocky region of serried ridges and precipitous ravines was awake with the thundering echoes of a terrible assault.

The darkness hid the armies one from the other. Shouts, yells, groans, and cries made fearful clamour in the gloom. The awful thunder of rolling rocks, hurled down the precipitous sides of the hill spur, spoke a terrible language of its own. Bold soldiers were dashed down to their death by these fearful weapons. Groans and cries and curses could be heard, whilst ever and anon the blaze of a steadily-directed volley from above or below lighted up the scene with weird splendour.

It was hard to remain still amid all this tumult; but Don Garcia, posted at a spot from whence he could obtain a certain amount of assurance as to the advance of the Spanish troops, was too well trained a soldier to endanger his cause by undue precipitation. He must let the attacking force push upwards foot by foot, and yard by yard, ere he made his own quick assault at this unguarded spot. A handful of men could force an entrance, he believed; but unless backed up by comrades from without, they would be in danger of losing that which they had won. With set teeth and glowing eyes he watched the flashes of musketry, which told of steady, of slow approach; and when his soldier instinct told him that the right moment had come, he waved his sword above his head and cried,—

“Follow me, men, to victory or death! Santiago! Santiago! Santiago!”

The battle-cry of ages was echoed by every soldier of that gallant little band as he sprang to his appointed place,

though the sound was well-nigh lost in the roar which encompassed the hill like a "garment rolled in blood." With the agility of a cat and the strength of a desperate warrior, Don Garcia sprang onwards and upwards to the very base of the citadel, his men following behind him in compact phalanx. Above them towered the frowning walls; at the base was the aperture, now made large enough to admit the passage of a stalwart soldier. Don Garcia, without a moment's hesitation, stooped and forced his way through. What he might encounter upon the other side he never paused to think. He was the leader of this attack, and it was for him to do and dare. Passing through a short tunnel, he emerged into a small courtyard, empty and dim, and above him loomed the walls and towers of the fortress, to the top of which a winding and unguarded stairway led.

Pausing for a few brief minutes for his small and resolute band to join him, Don Garcia sprang to this stairway and rushed up, followed by the whole company. Already they heard, by shouts from below, that the corregidor's men were scrambling over the rocks they had surmounted, and, with the scaling-ladders, were just beneath this unguarded wall.

"Santiago! Santiago!" shouted Don Garcia, flinging himself upon the ramparts, where some dozen swarthy Moriscos were assembled, hurling darts from their elevated position into the serried ranks below.

"Santiago! Santiago!" yelled his followers, springing, sword in hand, upon the Moriscos, who, taken thus abso-

lutely unawares, had not even time to draw their swords ere the Spaniards fell upon them with the fury of a long-pent-up hatred and hewed them to the ground. A gleam of moonlight shone out at that moment, and Don Garcia, snatching off his silver-embroidered scarf, tied it to his sword and waved it frantically over the ramparts. It was the preconcerted signal, and was seen and understood by those below, who answered with a wild burst of cheering and an upward rush that no force or power of the Moors could stay. Scarce five more minutes had passed before the bold standard-bearer of Velez Malaga, who was in the second advancing party, had scaled the wall and planted the Christian banner upon the battlements, whilst the thunder of Christian cheers and shouts rang to the welkin.

But even at that moment a band of wild Moriscos, headed by two tall and stalwart chieftains, whose faces would not have been unfamiliar to Don Garcia had there been light to see, burst upwards upon the battlements where the Spanish warriors stood victorious; and now, though the fortunes of the day, they believed, were secure, it behoved this gallant little band to make a desperate stand for their own lives.

"Cut them down! fling them over into the gulf beneath! Dogs of Christians, let them die!" shouted ferocious voices, as the Moriscos, with the fury of despair, flung themselves upon their assailants, themselves far less wearied and winded.

"Santiago! Santiago!" shouted the Spaniards back;

and setting their backs against the wall, or gathering round their flaunting standard, they met the onslaught of the foe, and gave back blow for blow.

For a moment the tide of battle ebbed and flowed—victory inclining one moment towards one side, the next towards the other; but now a yell of fear and dismay arose from the infidels, and the shouts of the Spaniards grew more and more triumphant. The Moors upon the tower faltered and wavered; and Don Garcia, making a spring at his own formidable antagonist, bore him headlong to the ground.

“Don Miguel de Solis, traitor to your king, abductor of helpless maidens beneath the king's protection, you are my prisoner. Give up your sword, or I drive mine into your heart!”

But even as he spoke these words Don Garcia felt a light touch upon his arm, and a voice spoke in his ear,—

“Nay, señor, take not his life when he lies thus helpless; for is it not written, ‘Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy’?”

CHAPTER XIII.

LOVE AND WAR.

DON GARCIA wheeled suddenly round, his uplifted weapon still in his hand, the white moonlight shining down upon his mail-clad figure, and his eyes alight with the fury of battle. It almost seemed to him as though he saw a vision—a maiden clad in floating garments, her face shaded by the folds of a Moorish veil, but it was a face he knew; and even as she spoke, he lowered the point of his weapon till it rested on the ground, and a cry of rapture and amaze sprang from his lips,—

“Doña Yolante! How come you here?”

“Yolante! Yolante! Yolante!” The shout was like a battle-cry, as Eudo sprang forward and clasped his sister in his arms. Don Garcia watched the meeting for a moment, and then turned his eyes towards the prostrate foe, whom he scarce yet knew whether to call Moor or Spaniard. The man had not attempted to move, but lay still with wide-open eyes, which were ablaze with impotent rage. The stones beneath him were being slowly dyed red with the trickle of blood from many wounds. His fingers still grasped the hilt of his sword, though his clasp

was growing less and less tenacious. From all sides shouts of victory were now arising from the Spanish soldiers, and shrieks and yells showed that the work of slaughter was going on around the fortress yet; though up on this battlemented tower strife had ceased, since every Morisco who had power to do so had fled for his life down the narrow stairway, or even over the battlements, risking a fearful fall.

"You are my prisoner, señor," spoke Don Garcia, "and it is to His Excellency Don Juan that you shall give account of the thing you have sought to accomplish. When I think of your black treachery to him, and to those who have received your hand in friendship, my fingers tingle to smite you as you lie. But for the intercession of this noble-hearted lady, I misdoubt me if I should keep my sword from burying itself in your false heart—false to your creed, your friends, your king! A noble foe, be he infidel or Christian, I know how to meet; but one who stoops to treachery and baseness to achieve a vile end, for him I have nothing but the most unmitigated contempt. Your sword, Don Miguel—if indeed you desire to be called by that name."

"I do not desire it, Señor Don Garcia," was the grim reply. "If I have played a double game, I will play it no longer. I renounce my Spanish name, as I have renounced the hated faith of the Christian. Henceforth I am Hassan Yahye, the deadly foe of every Spaniard and every Christian throughout the length and breadth of the land!"

As he spoke he made a sudden and most unexpected leap to his feet; his sword flashed in the moonlight, and Don Garcia heard the whistling sound as it seemed about to descend upon his head. He was taken unawares by the cat-like agility of his captive, and for one terrible second it flashed through his mind that he had found his lady-love, only to lose her by a blow from an infidel foe.

But the blow did not fall. He wheeled about with his own blade circling through the air, and there he saw that the uplifted arm of the assailant had been grasped by a woman's hand. For a moment or two Yolante had stayed the blow, and Don Garcia was ready for it as it clashed against his shining steel. The next instant, with a clever turn of the wrist, he had sent his adversary's blade spinning out over the battlements into the gulf beneath; and Hassan folded his arms with a dark and lowering face, as though awaiting the *coup de grâce*.

"Secure him, men," spoke Don Garcia quietly. "Bind him, and let his hurts be seen to.—Doña Yolante, I think I owe to you my safety, if not my life. But this is no place for you, sweet maiden. How came you hither, amid all this clash of arms?"

"Ah! how could I keep away when I heard the 'Santagos,' and knew that our rescuers had come?—O Eudo, Eudo!—Ah, Señor Don Garcia, you know not what it hath been all these weary days, now drawing into weeks. We knew that help would come—our hearts told us that. But these walls and towers are so strong! The Moriscos,

we heard, laughed to scorn the thought of assault. And we knew that they were but waiting till the Spaniards had come, and had been driven back with ignominy and slaughter, to make of us that which I cannot bear to think."

"I know, I know," cried Eudo hotly. "They would have forced you into hateful wedlock! My blood boils at the thought. And they call it love! But, sweet sister, you are safe. Never shall such peril be yours again. We are near now to Malaga. Doubtless ere long some English ship will put into that fair harbour. I am strong now and well. I have no need of your loving care. I will put you in charge of the captain. It may be there are other travellers who will give you welcome and make you as one of them; and you shall safely sail away homewards, and tell them that I only wait to see the victory of the Spanish arms, and I will follow you thither myself."

But Yolante threw back her head, and gazed first at her brother and then in a sudden swift fashion at Don Garcia. In the moonlight the flush upon her cheek could not clearly be seen.

"Nay, brother," she answered, "it is not for home that I am longing, but for the victory of the Spanish arms. I, too, would wait for that, in fair Granada, which I have come to love. God has been very merciful; He has heard our prayers, and has sent us help. It were a coward thought to fly, as though He were not King, and our trust in Him was vain. Ah no! not to Malaga but to

Granada let us go. But come below first, and let Esther see with her own eyes that deliverance hath come. Her faith did never fail. She upheld me when I was most nigh to despair. And our gentle Ayesha and sweet Zareefa, how much do we not owe to them!—O Señor Don Garcia, whatever betides in this fortress, let them be tenderly treated and protected. For, in sooth, had it not been for them—oh, I know not, I know not what might have been our fate!”

“I know, I know,” cried Don Garcia, “and I pledge my knightly word that no hurt shall befall them. Take us to them quickly, sweet lady, for already I hear sounds which betoken those things which ever follow upon victory. How came you hither yourself amid all this tumult? How did you dare adventure yourself in the midst of such strife and bloodshed?”

“Nay, but how could I keep away? In the confusion the door was left unguarded. Zareefa flew to us and unlocked it. We heard the shouts of the Spanish soldiers; we knew that they were forcing their way through the ravine of the Cuchillo, which the Moriscos thought they had made impassable, and that they would arrive beneath this tower, where our prison has been. When we heard the ‘Santiagos,’ ah, then we knew that they were indeed within the fortress. My feet carried me hither, I know not how.—I trow that I did know, brother, that you and Don Garcia and our cousin Antonio would be amongst the foremost in the conquest of the fortress of Frigiliana.”

She was leading the way as she spoke. They were

alone now upon the tower, for the Moriscos had fled, and the Spanish soldiers had followed, leaving their standard firmly planted to wave over the battlements. But all around the fortress were fearful tumult and confusion. The din was terrific, and the soldiers knew that bloody and terrible scenes were being enacted everywhere. Weary of enforced inactivity, and enraged at the resistance they had met, and at the loss they had suffered from rolling rocks and galling fire, the Spanish soldiers were even now wreaking their vengeance in fearful fashion upon the hapless Moriscos gathered together within the walls of the stronghold—men, women, and children being slaughtered almost indiscriminately; though many a Morisco mother, clasping her little ones in her arms, sprang headlong down some precipice, to be dashed to pieces at the bottom, sooner than fall into the hands of the soldiery. Already the war was taking that fearful and sanguinary character which seems inevitable when sons of the same soil, if not of the same faith, rise in arms against each other. Don Garcia felt rather than knew what was happening around those massive walls and upon that fortified plateau, and he gladly followed the swift footsteps of Yolante, not knowing how soon he and his brother caballeros might have to interpose on behalf of Ayesha and Zareefa, upon whose safety he had pledged his knightly word.

“This way, this way,” cried Yolante, as she fled downwards from the battlements. There was less sound of strife and tumult within the thick walls, but in the hollow distance came the echoes of the fray—the clash of

arms, the shouts of the soldiers, and the shrieks of hapless victims.

Now they emerged upon a wide stone landing, and a flood of light fell upon them from an open doorway. Zareefa, in an attitude of terror and expectancy, stood in that shaft of light; and behind her was Esther, her hand upon the shoulder of the excited girl, whom she was holding back with gentle authority. Within the room Ayesha could be seen, rocking herself to and fro upon the divan, and weeping and wringing her hands in terror.

“O my father, my father!” she wailed, in her Arabic tongue. “They will kill him—they will put him to death! And what will become of me and my daughter? Woe—woe—woe!”

“Nay, but Don Antonio has passed his word that he will save him, if it be possible,” spoke Esther’s clear tones. And then, as Eudo and Don Garcia, with Yolante, sprang into the area of light, Ayesha uttered a scream and covered her face, believing her last moment had come; whilst Zareefa welcomed them with vivid smiles, too keenly excited by all that was passing to have room for fear—indeed she felt almost safer amongst these Spanish caballeros than she had done amongst her grandsire’s fierce Moorish followers.

“Don Antonio! where is Don Antonio?” spoke Eudo, who had missed his friend and cousin, and wondered whither he had gone.

“He followed the flying Moriscos down the stairway,” answered Esther; “and when they would have hidden

themselves within these rooms, he stood at the door with his sword drawn, and barred their entrance. He had seen me, and knew that we were within. Then they fled still further downwards, and he opened the door and bid us not to fear—that he would answer for our safety. He and Don Pedro de Vilches and Don Luis de Marmol, with some other caballeros and many soldiers, were there; and when my mother wept aloud and called out that her father would be slain, Don Antonio himself declared that since El Zegri had interposed and held our lives and honour sacred, he should, if possible, be saved from death now, pledging himself to do all that one knight might in this matter: and so he hurried away.—Señor Don Garcia, tell me truly, is the fortress of Frigiliana in the hands of the Christians?”

“Truly I believe it, Doña Esther; and your father is not far distant. He is with the Corregidor Zuazo, and is doubtless within these walls ere this. Shall I go and seek him out for you? Doubtless he also will intercede for the brave El Zegri.—Do not weep so bitterly, señora; Don Antonio will do all that lies in his power.”

“My husband here!” cried Ayesha, roused from her floods of tears by the news. “Ah, then, let us return to fair Granada! Let us not live in these terrible fortresses, where all these perils await us. Oh, I have had enough of warfare to last me my life. Let us return to Granada, for it was better with us there than here.”

At that moment came a rush of hurrying feet towards these apartments, and Zareefa sprang backwards with a little shriek.

"The soldiers, the soldiers! they are coming!" she cried.

Don Garcia leaped to the door, and Eudo followed him. There fell upon their ears a sound of fearful tumult—shouting, yelling, cursing. The clash of arms made the walls echo and ring, and the flying footsteps came ever nearer and nearer.

Round the turn in the stone corridor rushed a few hapless Moriscos, followed by a rabble of Spanish and Italian soldiers—for there was an Italian contingent to Requesens' force—and a voice from amongst these latter shouted,—

"This is the way to the women's quarters. There will be loot and to spare here, and prisoners to sell for those who are first in the field."

Don Garcia flung Zareefa behind him, and cried to Esther, "Lock and bolt the door!" And he and Eudo placed themselves on the outside, their backs against it, their swords flashing in angry menace. The Moriscos, seeing Spaniards in front and behind, fell upon their faces in abject despair.

"Mercy, mercy, mercy!" they cried. "We are not soldiers; we are but the keepers of the women's quarters. Mercy, mercy, or we be all dead men!"

"Stand back!" shouted Don Garcia, in accents that thundered down the echoing corridor, as the Spanish soldiers with a yell of triumph sprang forward towards their prey. "Stand back, if ye be men! Halt, I say! Dare to approach one step nearer, and Don Juan of Aus-

tria shall be told of your insubordination! Stand back, I say, or I will drive my sword through the heart of the first man who dares to approach. Know you not that these be the quarters where the captive Christian maidens have been kept safe and free from hurt by the daughter of El Zegri himself? Dare to lay a hand upon any within these walls, dare to offer insult to her or to any in her keeping, and I myself will make it my care that His Excellency shall know all; and he will know how to punish! Stand back!"

Don Garcia was well known throughout the army as the friend of His Excellency, and a brave and distinguished officer high in command. With sullen faces the men obeyed, fearful of the consequences of disobedience. They lowered their weapons, they looked from the shining blade of Don Garcia to the grovelling Moriscos at his feet; and one man bolder than the rest cried out,—

"At least these be our prey. See the jewels upon their fingers and in their ears! Those are our lawful plunder. Let us slay them and leave the women. Are we honest soldiers to be defrauded of all?"

For great anger had been aroused at different times in the campaign at the action of the Marquess of Mondejar in withholding his soldiers from lawless looting. Although certain places, when taken, had been given up to the savage will of the soldiery, in other cases the Moriscos had been protected and the soldiers restrained. This was known to the new army of the south under Requesens, and the men were horribly afraid lest some such restriction should

be laid upon them in the matter of what they regarded as lawful plunder. They need not have feared. Requesens was not of the moderate temper of Mondejar; he had no intention of interfering on behalf of the vanquished. But Don Garcia came from the other army, and none knew exactly what his powers might be.

“Go seek your plunder elsewhere!” he cried, in tones of ringing command. “Is not the whole fortress before you? Be gone! These men are here to defend their master’s daughter. None shall lay hands upon them. For shame that you stand raving there, within hearing of the Christian maidens whom these men have sought to defend. Hear ye not the roar of battle elsewhere? Go then and join it, if you would kill and plunder; but the first man that dares to strike a blow here shall fall by my sword. The rest shall be reported to His Excellency, to deal with as it pleases him.”

Cowed and half shamed, though deeply resentful, the men turned away; and as the roar of strife broke afresh upon their ears, they quickened their march into a run. For, in truth, it was as Don Garcia had said: the whole of this great fortress, and the rocky table-land which it commanded, were theirs; and thither were assembled the whole Morisco population of the neighbouring Sierra, who had flocked thither for protection directly the approach of the Christian host was made known.

Don Garcia drew a long breath as he saw the men turn and rush away in search of fresh booty, and in quick, stern tones he addressed the grovelling Moriscos

at his feet, who were calling down the blessings of Allah upon him.

“Up, men, and grasp your weapons! Be ready, lest another attack be made. The lust of blood is upon the soldiers. Who knows what we may have to expect from them? Hark at those sounds! Terrible deeds are being enacted within these walls. Would that I could go there to see! But I trow my post is here. Who knows that a larger body will not return to seek what they can find within these rooms! Would that Antonio and the others would return! We may want their stout arms to hold this place from the wild freebooters.”

Don Garcia had seen warfare before. He knew what Spanish and Italian soldiers were like when the lust of slaughter and plunder was upon them, and their hearts were burning with vengeful thoughts of those things which Christian men and women had suffered at the hands of the infidel. Reprisal could not but be looked for; and yet ought not the Christian, vaunting his faith and his love for the Lord whose name he bore, to be ready to show something of the spirit that can forgive and return good for evil? How else were the Christians to show themselves better than the infidels, against whom they must needs wage war?

Down the corridor again came a rush of hurrying feet. Don Garcia braced himself for a renewed attack, placing himself at the head of the Moriscos, who had now grasped their weapons, and taken heart of grace at seeing themselves supported and protected by this paladin of a

Christian knight. Nearer and nearer came the rush; but it seemed as though there was fighting too: shouts and cries made hideous din, and before aught could be seen the clamour was well-nigh deafening. Above all else rang a trumpet-like voice uttering words of command, and Don Garcia spoke between his shut teeth,—

“That is Pedro of the wooden leg. I should know his voice amongst a thousand. What means this burst of strife and fury? Methought the fortress was already ours.”

Round the angle of the stone corridor swept the tide of battle. It was one surging mass of humanity fighting like tigers with the unseen foes in front, who were pressing them back inch by inch and foot by foot, yelling like demons from the pit.

“He is ours! he is ours! Give him to us! Infidel dog, let him die the death he merits! We will have him! We will hack him in pieces; we will tear out his living heart; we will burn him to ashes, living or dead! Give him up, give him up! he is our lawful captive taken in fight. None are friends to the King of Spain who protect his enemies.”

Don Luis de Marmol suddenly seemed to appear, detaching himself from the seething mass of humanity, and dashing towards the closed doors by which Don Garcia and Eudo stood with the guard.

“It is El Zegri,” he cried, “the father of the woman who has protected yonder ladies from hurt. We have saved him at the risk of our lives from the fury of the

soldiers. We are bringing him hither for better security. These doors are strong. Once inside he will be safe; and Antonio too, who I fear has been grievously wounded in plucking him out of the hands of the soldiers, who would have torn him to pieces. Ha! so you are keeping this place safe. Good! We are all together once again. We shall hold that pack of yelling curs at bay. It is the Italian band that gives the trouble. The Spaniards will listen to the voice of command; the Italians will listen to nothing. Who keeps the door within? Will they open it at a signal? See, yonder is El Zegri. We must get him within, and stand sentinel at the doors. When they see we have been reinforced, the hounds will doubtless fall back. Who holds the door within?"

"Doña Esther and Doña Yolante. We can trust their courage. I will knock and speak, and they will answer."

Quite quietly the bolts were drawn at the word of Don Garcia, and, despite the hideous din from without, Esther's grave, calm face looked forth. A shriek from Ayesha bespoke her fears, but the next moment this was changed into a cry of joy and rapture; for a tall, battered, blood-stained figure was thrust into the room by the caballeros from without—two blood-stained figures, indeed, one of which fell prone within the threshold, and lay motionless there. Ayesha flung herself into the arms of her father, regardless of blood and dishevelment; whilst Esther and Yolante bent over the fallen caballero, and the latter exclaimed with a sharp, quick cry of dismay,—

“It is Antonio! Pray Heaven he be not dead!”

El Zegri wheeled round from the embrace of his daughter. He was panting yet from his exertions; his clothing was torn, he was wounded in half a dozen different places, and his face was blackened with the smoke of powder.

“Dead!” he cried, stepping forward and lifting Antonio in his strong arms much as he might have lifted a child, and laying him upon one of the divans, whilst Esther put cushions beneath his head. “Nay, I pray Allah that it be not so, for yonder knight did stand beside me and save me from the fury of the Christian soldiers, who else must assuredly have hacked me in pieces as I stood. It was he who, calling his comrades about him, brought me hither in safety at risk of their lives. Nay, we must not let him die who has done this thing; though wherefore he should thus have adventured his safety for mine I cannot guess.”

“Ah, but I know,” cried Zareefa, who had flown at Esther’s bidding, and now brought water and medicaments, which her sister’s skilful fingers well knew how to use so as to stay the flow of blood and restore consciousness to the wounded man. “Don Antonio doth know how that you have given protection to Doña Yolante, his cousin, and to Esther here, whom he doth love. And he did swear to me that you should be protected for that, and this is how he keeps his word.”

Esther’s face glowed as she bent over the unconscious man, but she made no response. Outside, the din of battle still went on; but little by little the sounds ceased, and presently all was still. Just as Antonio opened his eyes

to a consciousness of his surroundings, Zareefa, in response to a preconcerted signal, drew back the bolts once more, and the little band of caballeros, who had risked so much to save those who had befriended Esther and Yolante in their hour of dire need, stood without, with the tidings that all was well. The baffled soldiers had departed. Word had been sent both to the commander, Requesens, and to the corregidor as to the necessity for giving protection to El Zegri and his family. Both had agreed that honour demanded it; and now Señor Vivar himself had come with a safe-conduct for his son-in-law, and the permission for him to retire to whatever place he chose, with a few personal followers and his daughter and granddaughter.

“But you have leave, señor, to remain within this tower in Frigiliana till the soldiers have done their work and withdrawn,” spoke Don Garcia courteously. “You are wounded, and in need of repose; and our comrade there is in like case. The stronghold is to be destroyed, but this tower will be left standing, as a memorial of what Frigiliana hath been. And I trow that it is large enough to give us all shelter, till we are able to start forth for fair Granada once more.”

Yolante sprang forward with sparkling eyes. She looked from her brother's face to those of Don Garcia and Antonio.

“Ah, beautiful Granada! How I have longed to see it again! But you will not leave us to find our way thither alone? You will remain in the tower here in Frigiliana until such time as we may all travel thence together?”

Don Garcia took her hand and carried it to his lips.

"I ask nothing better, gentle lady," he said, "than to call myself for ever and ever your faithful servant and knight."

Antonio's eyes were fixed full at that moment upon the face of Esther, as she bent over him, holding to his lips a cooling draught. He put up a feeble hand, and his fingers touched hers.

"I would echo those words of my comrade and friend," he said, in a very low voice, so that none save she could hear. "Doña Esther, I have told it you before; yet I must needs tell it you again. I love you, I love you. I would give my life for yours."

"I think you have proved that, Señor Don Antonio, by what you have already done for us," she answered very low. "Had it not been for you and others, and your speed and devotion, I trow the fortress of Frigiliana would be yet in the hands of the Moors, and ourselves their helpless prisoners."

"Then may I in days to come, when I am something better than this useless log, speak to you again of this, sweet lady? Is there hope for me, Doña Esther? When I have somewhat more to offer than this battered carcass—"

A rich crimson had suffused her face. The hand which held the cup trembled for a moment, and then her fingers closed upon his.

"Señor," she answered, in a very low tone, "do you think a woman's heart holds less of love for one who has received hurt in her defence than when he is sound and

whole? Surely if that were so it could not be love. Love does but burn more brightly in the hour of trial and sorrow and fear. Did not my heart tell me from the very first that we should not have to tarry long for deliverance, and that Don Antonio de Aguilar would be one of those to come first to our aid?"

He held her fingers close. There was light in his eyes, though his voice was yet faint from loss of blood.

"Doña Esther, tell me truly, do you love me?"

She bent her head, and her eyes gave answer; and so, in the midst of strife and tumult and all the terrors and horrors of warfare, that betrothal of faithful, loving hearts was made.

Terrible were the scenes enacted in Frigiliana during that day and next; but the inmates of the inner tower, which was to be preserved, and the basement of which was used as a hospital for wounded Spanish and Italian soldiers, knew little about it. Esther and Yolante gave aid in tending the wounded, and Zareefa flitted like a fairy from one to another with offerings of fruit or flowers; but they were not suffered to pass beyond the limits of their own encircling walls, or to look upon the grim scenes of desolation without. Two thousand hapless Moriscos, at the lowest computation, had perished within the walls of Frigiliana, or had been dashed to pieces upon the rocks below. The rest had fled to the mountains, pursued by enraged soldiers, who often overtook and massacred them in cold blood. Men, women, and children were being marched in gangs down to the coast, to be sold to slavery,

and all the stores and spoils of the fortress were seized upon by Spaniard or Italian, who regarded these as lawful booty.

The walls and bulwarks of the place were then blown up and destroyed, and nothing of the mighty mass of building remained save that innermost tower where the wounded and the women were housed; and even the majority of the wounded made shift to leave, and accompany their comrades to the coast. The lust for booty had seized upon them, and they feared they would lose their share if they were left behind.

And so a great silence settled down upon that once famous fortress, and only a brave little garrison remained, of sufficient strength to ensure the safety of those who only awaited a favourable opportunity to return once more to Granada.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MISSION TO THE MOORS.

IT was Zareefa who brought the news. She was like a creature of sunshine and air; walls would not hold her captive. She seemed to have the power of eluding all supervision, and appearing and disappearing at will. Every nook and cranny of the tower was familiar to her, and she shared her secrets only with Eudo, whom she had constituted her especial friend and playfellow, flinging aside all the traditions in which she had been reared by her mother, and openly declaring herself a daughter of the West, like her beloved Esther. She had no fear of the mountain heights or the crags about the rocky plateau, from which all traces of the terrible carnage had been washed away by a merciful series of terrific summer thunderstorms, which had perhaps saved the little party still at Frigiliana from the perils of disease. Zareefa, light of foot as a mountain roe, would spend much time in climbing the rocky ridges, sometimes alone, sometimes in company with Eudo or Yolante, or both; and from these vantage heights wide views over the whole surrounding country could be obtained, and nothing could approach the place without being instantly discovered.

“They are coming! they are coming! Methinks it must needs be they. There is a little band of soldiers, making goodly show; and beyond them a party of caballeros; and methinks I did see the cowl and gown of some monks or priests who rode with them. Sure it must be the party from Granada for whom we are waiting.—Don Antonio, methinks your gallant father is at hand.”

Antonio sprang to his feet, his face alight, and Yolante uttered a little cry of joy. The days had flown by with wondrous speed and happiness in this lonely mountain spot, hemmed in by rocks and ravines, and far away from home and friends. Once a prison where they had lived in fear and trembling from day to day, now a home where peace and happiness reigned, they scarce knew it for the same. And yet when news came that friends were on their way to bring them forth once again, their hearts bounded with joy; for it had begun to seem as though they were shut off from all the world beside, perched in this eyrie in the midst of the mountains, and never altogether certain that the Moriscos might not gather together once again, and revenge upon this little party left behind the horrors of the fall of Frigiliana.

They had not let themselves dwell upon this possibility. The maidens, secure in their happiness and in the strong protection of this gallant contingent of knights and gentlemen from Granada, had scarce known a qualm of fear. But one of Don Garcia's first acts had been to send off a swift and sagacious messenger to Don Juan, with news of all that had happened to them since leaving Granada,

together with dispatches to Don Rodrigo de Aguilar, telling him of his niece's safety, his son's hurts, and the necessity for remaining in the tower of Frigiliana until Antonio and other of their company should be healed of their wounds. None of the Granada contingent desired to join themselves to the army of Requesens or even to that of the Corregidor of Velez. They wished to return to Granada as soon as they were able, and for this reason it behoved them to wait till all were fully restored to health, as there was no certainty that they might not have to fight their way from time to time through roving bands of Moriscos, who, although beaten and cowed for the moment in these regions, might at any time gather together to oppose a small Christian force.

The messenger had gone and returned in a shorter time than had been expected, and the letters he brought from Granada contained directions for this little party to wait still in the shelter of the tower; for Don Rodrigo wrote that he himself purposed to gather a small and picked band of men, and to proceed to Frigiliana in person, and to conduct back to Granada the ladies who had suffered such indignity from the hands of the Moors, together with their gallant defenders and rescuers. The party thus augmented would be strong enough to defy any wandering bands of Moriscos, and might travel homewards without fear.

And now Zareefa had brought the eagerly-desired tidings, and already excitement permeated the garrison, and men-at-arms were mustering to ride forth and give greet-

ing to their brothers of the faith, whose appearance was so welcome.

Yolante, mounted upon a light barb which carried her proudly, and attended by her cousin and Don Garcia, could not be restrained from riding out to meet her uncle. There was one narrow bridle path by which a sure-footed mountain horse could make the winding ascent to the rocky table-land, and this path had been improved by the labours of the soldiers, under the instruction of Don Garcia. Down in the smiling plain below the little cavalcade could be seen winding gaily along, and soon the two parties saw each other full, and waved a joyous greeting.

Only a few minutes later and Yolante was in her uncle's arms, and the tears stood in the grave eyes of the brave caballero as he realized the perils through which the frail girl had passed, and thanked Heaven in his heart that she had been brought safely through them all.

"Uncle, uncle, how good of you to come all this long and weary way yourself!" cried Yolante. "And see, here is Antonio, well-nigh himself once more, albeit I fear he is still something weak from his many wounds. But Esther hath been his nurse, and there is no skill so great as hers, and soon he will be sound and whole again; whilst as for Eudo, this mountain air hath made of him a new man. Methinks at home they would scarce know him; and he has been through all that terrible fighting without so much as a scratch."

The father turned towards his son and grasped him by the hand. Neither spoke, but the look which they ex-

changed was as eloquent as words. Then Eudo came for his greeting, and Don Garcia pressed forward with the intimacy of an old and tried friend. Indeed, there was scarce a man in the little band of welcomers whose face was unknown to Don Rodrigo, and glad were the greetings which were exchanged as friend clasped the hand of friend, and eagerly asked news of those left behind in Granada.

There was much indeed to tell of what had passed there since Don Juan had ridden forth to visit some of the outlying villages, and had been in some small personal danger on the return journey, besides having suffered the loss of the two maidens who had been beneath his protection.

Don Rodrigo, sitting in the midst of a breathless group of listeners, told the tale.

“His Majesty has been much moved by the news of what did happen at that time, and I fear me it has wrought some change in his plans. In lieu of the long-expected command for Don Juan to lead forth the army in person, His Majesty lays command upon him not to adventure his own person in warfare, but to direct the campaign from Granada—a matter of no small difficulty, and one which irks him sorely; for he is above all things a man of action, and not one of those soldiers who can fight with his pen better than with his sword.”

“Indeed no!” spoke Don Garcia quickly. “I trow that he will sorely chafe against such command; and yet His Majesty is one who must needs be obeyed.”

“Yes, truly; and this decree on the part of the king throws the chiefest power of the actual fighting into the

hands of the Viceroy of Murcia, the stern Marquess de Los Velez, who is feared and hated above measure by all the Moriscos, whose footsteps are ever marked by fire and blood, and who is always on the side of those harsh methods which our friend the Marquess of Mondejar has ever sought to avoid. But the die is now cast. The king has heard and approved the counsels of Mondejar's enemies, and already that step has been taken in Granada which we have feared from the first, and which must slowly and surely lead to her ruin."

"What step?" asked his son, with eager interest; and even as he spoke he leaned a little nearer towards Esther, and laid his hand upon hers. He divined what was coming, and that it would hurt her to hear it. For she was one of those whose hearts went out to the oppressed and unhappy, no matter what their nationality or their faith might be.

"Verily that which the president, Deza, hath always urged upon the king—even the banishment from Granada of all Morisco subjects save those who have wealth or influence sufficient to purchase the right to remain; and those who are thus banished are not rebels or foes, but loyal subjects, who have faithfully kept the peace and obeyed the laws."

"But what injustice—what cruelty!" cried many voices. "By such acts His Majesty will alienate even those amongst the Moriscos who would fain dwell at peace."

"That is what we fear, indeed," answered Don Rodrigo.

“And it makes it little better that the thing is done under a cloak of clemency and good will. It is pretended that the Moriscos are not safe in Granada; that the feelings of the Christian populace will run too high against them. They are told that they are only banished for their own safety and welfare, and that they are to be dispersed in small parties throughout the loyal towns of Spain. But the flimsy pretext will not serve. All know that the king's object is to break up utterly the nationality and the faith of the Moors, and keep them from being any longer a people. They know it themselves, and bitterly do they resent it.”

“And how are they to live, scattered abroad in other cities, without home, without business, without friends or ties?” asked Esther's father, with suddenly kindling eyes. “How doth His Majesty make provision for that?”

Don Rodrigo shook his head gravely.

“Alas, I fear me, little provision is made. They are to have protection for the journey; but who can say how far Spanish soldiers are to be trusted for such a task? Even in Granada, while the muster was being made, something very like a riot broke out, and it took Don Juan's personal presence and authority to hinder the threatened bloodshed. Already we know that numbers of the younger Moriscos have broken away and fled to the mountains of the Alpuxarras in open rebellion. Many more will probably do so, and the fierce hatred blaze up into new life. It was said before this that Aben Humeya was beginning to weary of the strife, and to listen to advice from his counsellors as to

the wisdom of submission; but whether or not that were true before, I misdoubt me if any Morisco will now listen to counsels of peace—not, indeed, unless our good friends here can induce them to do so,” and his glance rested upon the figures of two monks, who stood silent and motionless all this while, their hands folded in their robes.

It was Father Albotodo and Father Christoval de Molina, who had accompanied Don Rodrigo upon his ride. The former, who had laboured for so many years and with such zeal and success amongst the Moors of the Albaycin, now felt his occupation gone. True, there were a good many of his flock still left in the city; but the greater part had been driven forth into banishment, and his heart yearned after his scattered sheep more than after those who were left behind. He knew how many of them would flee away from the ranks of the banished band, and would find refuge in the mountainous regions surrounding Granada. He longed to follow them, and to maintain his hold upon them there; and Father Christoval, who had proved his courage as a warrior in many a stern fight ere this, was eager to lead forth, as it were, a crusade amongst the faltering Moriscos, seeking to bring them to a better mind, and to show them that only by submission to the powers of the State and of the Church could peace and happiness be restored to them and to the realm.

“And we have come hither,” spoke the monk, in his ringing accents, “to see whether we cannot find those who will help us here in Frigiliana.—Señor Vivar (Ben Abner, by your old name), you are one of those who can love

the Morisco and understand him, whilst holding fast your faith in Christ and our blessed Lady. It is you and such as you whom we would seek to enlist beneath our banner. And we want women too, for amongst the Morisco wives and daughters we may not carry our message. Yet woman has ever borne her share in the statecraft of the world, whether kingdoms or individuals have had to be dealt with. You have a wife, Ben Abner, who, if I mistake not, would speak upon the side of peace. You have a daughter—" Here he paused, and his flashing gaze met the calm earnestness of Esther's dark eyes. She rose and spoke.

"Let me go with you, my father. I will carry a message of peace and good will to my sisters of the alien faith. If they heed not the name of Christ, they may yet desire to live at peace and to bring to an end this fearful war. Let me take the message to them! How gladly would I do it! I know them and I love them. Methinks they would listen to me."

Antonio rose suddenly and clasped Esther's hand in his.

"Señor my father," he said, speaking slowly and very earnestly, "I too do feel the deepest compassion for this unhappy nation, to which Spain owes so much of her prosperity, yet which is now, as it seems, to be trodden mercilessly under foot. I, too, would go forth amongst them. This maiden is my betrothed wife. I have loved her long; none other image has ever been in my heart. She has plighted now her troth to me. Let Father Albotodo make her my wife ere we leave this fortress of Frigiliana, and

we will together join this mission to the Moriscos, and work with all our heart and soul in the cause of peace and righteousness."

At that moment a curtain was drawn back which concealed an inner room from view, and the tall form of El Zegri stood framed in the aperture. He still wore the Moorish robes, and one arm he carried in a sling; but he bore himself with an air of great dignity and power, and his sonorous voice rang through the room.

"Señors, I too would be of your company. I too would urge upon my people the need to submit and to sue for peace. These weeks which I have passed in the fortress of Frigiliana have taught me many lessons. I have learned that the King of Spain has armies too large for us to resist, wherefore it is the choice betwixt submission and annihilation. I have learned, too, that Christian caballeros can be noble and generous foes, and that though the soldiers in the ranks can fight and avenge themselves with the same fury as we ourselves have done, yet that their leaders ofttimes seek to restrain them, and show themselves nobly and mercifully disposed towards prisoners and captives. I owe my life to yonder caballero, who risked his own to save it. My daughter and her child have been kept safe from all hurt at a time when fearful things were being enacted all around us. That was the work of Christian knights. I am not of your faith, señors, but I am on the side of peace, and by your leave will join your ranks, and seek to work upon the minds and hearts of my own people."

“And I will go with you,” spoke Señor Vivar. “I will call myself once more Ben Abner, and assume the familiar robes which I love better than my Spanish dress. I will go amongst them, and my wife will doubtless follow me, with my little Zareefa. As for Esther, you, my child, are of age to judge for yourself. And you have made your choice. If you are to wed this gentleman, my blessing shall go with you, and I think I can satisfy Don Rodrigo in the matter of dowry; but—”

“I ask no dowry,” spoke Antonio, who still held Esther by the hand. “I only ask you for your daughter, señor, and of my father his blessing in my choice. If she is to adventure herself into places where perchance peril doth lurk, I must be there as her champion and defender. It must be as man and wife that we go forth upon this crusade.”

Don Rodrigo had been startled not a little by his son's first declaration of love. Yet he was not altogether unprepared. He and Doña Magdalena had seen ere this how things were tending with him, and none could know Esther without giving her admiration and reverence and love. It was not, perhaps, the marriage the father would have chosen for his eldest son, but at least there was no great objection or obstacle to it. The girl was rich, of ancient lineage, and of the Christian faith; she was beautiful, of noble disposition, and blessed with superb health. Mixed racial marriages had become so common in Spain that the admixture of Jewish blood did not count as any great drawback. And Don Rodrigo saw that his son's mind

was made up. He rapidly reviewed the situation. He was heart and soul desirous of seeing peace restored, without the horrors of long-protracted warfare, and he believed his son would be a valuable ally to the mission of peace which the two fathers were about to establish. If he and Esther had already plighted their troth, why not send them forth as man and wife? There was something in the idea which touched the romantic side of his nature, which is easily stirred in every true son of Spain. He rose and took Esther's hand in his, and looked into her eyes.

"Tell me, Doña Esther, is this thing so? And are you ready to go forth upon this mission as the wedded wife of my son?"

"With your consent, señor, and with that of my father, I am ready and willing," she answered, in a low, clear voice.

"Bless you, my children!" spoke the deep tones of Father Albotodo. "I have known you both and watched you both from childhood upward, and I doubt not but that the Lord has worked in your hearts for this end. What He has joined together let not man put asunder."

"Amen," echoed Father Christoval earnestly.

It was thus that the troth-plight of Esther and Antonio received the sanction of the Church and of the fathers of bride and bridegroom; and it was only a few days later, in the early morning, that, a little chapel having been duly fitted up, the marriage was solemnized with the simple solemnity incident to the occasion. Yolante stood

beside the bride, as her companion and supporter; and Don Garcia performed the like office for his friend Antonio, and his gaze often fixed itself upon the earnest face of the English maiden, who followed the service with so much absorbed interest. But as the father addressed some words of counsel and benediction to the couple he had just joined together, Yolante's eyes wandered round the little dim building, which was insufficiently lighted by one or two narrow, barred windows. She suddenly gave a start of astonishment, almost of terror; for she saw a wild, haggard face staring in through one of those apertures, and in it she recognized the wasted features and flaming eyes of Don Miguel de Solis, the man who had so persecuted her with his proffers of love, and had been lying in strict captivity with his wounded brother ever since the fall of Frigiliana.

She knew that the brothers were prisoners, but the caballeros never spoke to her of them. She knew that it was only through her intercession that they had been saved from death. Much as she and Esther had had cause to fear and hate these men, they could not forget, or quite ignore, that it was love which had prompted them to this act of treachery; and they remembered that, during the time when they had been completely in their power, they had suffered no hurt and no wrong. Indeed, for a time they had believed them to be their protectors and saviours. So the girls had pleaded for mercy for both brothers, and knew that their lives had been spared; and now Yolante found herself gazing full into the eyes of

Don Miguel, which were fixed upon her with something of despairing appeal.

Don Garcia's eyes followed her glance, and he saw the face at the barred window, and remembered that the little court where the prisoners took their exercise was overlooked by the barred window of this little dim place. He drew Yolante's hand within his arm with a protecting gesture as they filed out of the building at the conclusion of the ceremony, and she looked up into his face and asked,—

“Did you see him? How terribly he has changed! O Don Garcia, what is to be their fate? They have not suffered any cruelty, I trust, at the hands of the soldiers?”

“No, no; I have seen to that. They have suffered nothing save close imprisonment, such as is needful for such characters. And Don Manuel lay at death's door for long; he has but recently made any way towards recovery. I suppose that we must take them to Granada as prisoners when we return, and see what Don Juan will judge their case demands.”

“Ah no!” suddenly cried Yolante; “let them not be taken as prisoners to the city where they have lived as free and honourable men. Such would be too hard a fate. Let them be given into the kindly keeping of Father Albotodo, whom in days past they did revere and trust. Doubtless he will show to them the error of their ways, and perchance they will even join with El Zegri the Morisco, and with others of the mission, in trying to per-

suade their brethren to lay down their arms and submit themselves to the rule of the Spanish king."

At that moment Esther turned round. She was leaning on the arm of her bridegroom, and it seemed as though some of the words spoken had penetrated to her understanding; for she looked up at Don Garcia, who was in command of the remnant of the stronghold of Frigiliana, and said,—

"May I ask a boon of you, señor, upon this my wedding day?"

He bowed low before her and used the new name, which brought a flush both to her face and that of Antonio,—

"Doña Esther de Aguilar can ask nothing of me which I will not move heaven and earth to compass."

"Then, señor, I ask that the two prisoners confined in this tower, whom we know best by the names of Don Miguel and Don Manuel de Solis, may join us at the wedding feast which is forthwith to be spread for us above."

"It shall be done, señora," he answered, without a moment's hesitation; and Yolante flashed a glance of gladness upon him, for it seemed as though on such a day as this some such act of clemency might well be performed.

"Take me to those hapless youths," spoke the voice of Father Albotodo from behind. He had removed his vestments, and was clad again in the long brown robe in which they best knew him.

Don Garcia gave Yolante over to the care of her brother, and beckoned to the father to follow him.

An hour later, as the party assembled to do justice to the feast which the skill of Spanish soldiers, aided by sundry efforts of Ayesha and Zareefa and Yolante, had provided in honour of the occasion, Don Garcia entered, closely followed by two tall and haggard men dressed in the Spanish fashion, whose hollow eyes and bearded faces told a tale of suffering and neglect. It was hard to recognize in them the finished caballeros who had come and gone so gaily in Granada. Their beards accentuated all that was Morisco in the type of their faces, and the size and brilliance of their great dark eyes added to this impression.

For a moment there was silence as they appeared, and then Esther moved gently forward with words of kindly greeting. Others followed her example, and the captives were placed at table with those whom in old days they had reckoned as friends, but against whom their hands had been raised in bitter hatred and open warfare, and whom they had scarcely decided now whether most to hate or most to respect and admire. Father Albotodo brought up the rear, his face shining with a light of happiness.

"Brands plucked from the burning," he said in a low voice to Father Christoval as he passed, "I trow we shall save them yet for Christ and the Church."

It was a strange wedding feast, and yet a very happy one. The shadow of coming parting lay upon all hearts, since in a few days the start from Frigiliana was to be made; and some of those assembled there would return to Granada, whilst others would diverge at a given point and

take the route which would lead them into the Alpuxarras, where they hoped to find amid the roving bands of rebels those who would hear the voice of counsel, and to carry their message into those towns and villages that were halting between two opinions, not knowing what it were best to do.

Don Miguel was near to Yolante at table, and once he leaned towards her and spoke.

“Lady, have I your pardon for the wrong I sought to do you? I do repent me of my sin. If I could know myself forgiven, I could go with a lighter heart to the death which awaits me.”

“Señor, I have forgiven; and I will pray that you may not meet such fate. Don Juan is merciful—”

She stopped suddenly, for she heard another voice speaking, and the speaker uttered the names of both the brothers. Don Manuel was sitting white and still, like a man who has been down to the gates of death and has only just returned from thence.

“I claim these men in the name of Holy Church!” spoke Father Albotodo. “I did baptize them years ago, and I have watched over them since. They have apostatized, it is true, and done grievous wrong; but in their prison-house better thoughts have come. I have hopes of them once more.—Don Garcia, give them to me—to us—for our mission to their brethren. I trow that such is the wish of the bride, whose word is law this day. Give them to me, and I will answer for it you shall not have cause for repentance.”

Don Garcia looked at Esther, whose eyes gave eloquent response; he glanced from one prisoner to the other and back at Father Albotodo, and bent his head in assent.

“Your request is granted, my father,” he said: “henceforth these men are no longer prisoners of war; they belong to you, and have passed into your charge.”

CHAPTER XV.

AT LAST!

DON JUAN paced moodily up and down the great rooms of the Palace of Audience, where he had his quarters in Granada's fair city. From time to time he glanced out of the darkening windows, saw the falling flakes of snow whitening the ground, and his face grew ever darker and more dark.

"Shall I never have liberty of action? Will these shackles imposed by my royal brother never be removed?" he exclaimed, speaking aloud in his impatience and irritation. "How many more months will be suffered to pass by whilst we remain in inglorious inactivity, shut up within the walls of our cities and fortresses, leaving the Moriscos to ravage and destroy, to seize upon one fair town after another even as they will? Did we not show at Frigiliana what Christian knights could achieve against the infidel foe? Why, then, are we thus let and hindered in prosecuting the war? Are we to do nought but drive forth like hunted sheep the loyal Morisco population, which we ought by every law, human and divine, to protect and cherish? Are we ever to act as tyrants and cowards

instead of bold Christian warriors? Look how they have served Mondejar—the man whose policy, if carried out, would, I truly believe, have quelled rebellion and brought the Moriscos under the rule of my royal brother peacefully again. He is banished from Granada; his captain-generalship has ceased; and although he is called to the king's councils, and will doubtless be promoted to honour elsewhere, yet all men here know that he has been removed because his policy is not approved. And yet, whilst driving the Moriscos to desperation by edicts and persecutions, they will not let forth our armies to meet them in battle: here are we penned like sheep in a fold, and the wolves are ravaging the country as they will."

More and more rapid became his walk, more and more rapid became his words; his eyes flashed beneath their dark brows. From time to time he laid his hand significantly upon the hilt of his sword.

"His Majesty surely forgets that with the murder of Aben Humeya by his own people, and by the accession of Aben Aboo as the king of the Moriscos, we have a very different man to deal with. Humeya was almost as much a Spaniard as a Morisco. He was easily brought to a halt betwixt two opinions. He had been worked upon by Mondejar's emissaries. He was all but ready to make submission, when he was slain by his allies of Algeria, those fierce Turks who have stirred up anew the spirit of strife amongst the Moriscos. Aben Aboo is an older man, an abler commander, free from that vanity and vacillation which made Humeya an easy tool to friend or foe. Since

he was treated with such fearful cruelty by the Spanish soldiers to make him confess the hiding-place of Aben Humeya—cruelty which was then mistakenly believed to have caused his death—his hatred against the Spaniards had never changed or faltered. He was friendly once to the king; now he is his most bitter foe. All his genius, all his knowledge of us and our methods, will now be employed against us. And we lie idle within sheltering walls, whilst he moves hither and thither, in person or by his generals, and town after town falls to him, till the Moriscos are threatening even the fair lands of Murcia!”

The young soldier bit his lip, and his eyes flashed fire.

“What have we not lost these last months of inactivity? It makes my blood boil to think of it. Seron, Purchena, Tahali, Xurgal, Cantoria, Galera, Orgiba—all now in the hands of the foe! Methinks it is such shame to Christian arms as they have never known before! Orgiba! a place we have taken and held and warred for—a place we should have strengthened and held to the last. And we could have done it. Molina was a gallant defender. He was not afraid of the encompassing host. He trusted that deliverance would come, and in a measure it did. Oh, my blood tingles at the shame of those half measures! And at the last there was nothing for him to do but to destroy the fortifications he had spent so much pains and toil in strengthening, and evacuate the place of his own free will, because, forsooth, no sufficient aid was sent him—only enough to divert the attention of the enemy and enable him to make good his retreat. Faugh! is that

warfare? is that Spanish might? And now not only is all the Alpuxarras in flames, but the whole district of the Almanzora is in rebellion. And Los Velez sits sullen and idle at Calahorra, and only asserts his presence by a few raids, when he should have led his conquering army right up to the walls of Granada!"

There was a knock at the outer door. Don Juan paused in his walk. He had given orders that he wished to be alone, unless something of urgency occurred to require his personal attention. He was wishful to pen yet another letter to the king, urging upon him the necessity for immediate and concerted action. Already he had sent messenger after messenger with dispatches to this effect; and, in truth, he had so far stirred up his royal brother that he had quitted Madrid and arrived at Cordoba, to be nearer the seat of war, and thus to facilitate communication. But his extraordinary policy of tediousness and vacillation seemed as impossible as ever to combat; and though he gave ready assent to every suggestion from Deza or the archbishop which inflicted some fresh injustice upon his loyal Morisco subjects, he was as far as ever from taking prompt and decisive action against the rebels, and a fatal paralysis had come over the situation. The army of Don Juan was shut up in Granada, chafing and indignant; whilst that of the Marquess de Los Velez in the west was bleeding to death through desertion and discontent, because no forward action was taken, and there was neither glory nor spoil to be won by remaining under his banner.

When Don Juan knew that the king was at Cordoba

in person, he could scarcely be restrained from speeding thither himself to lay his plans and petitions at the royal feet. His friends and advisers, however, held him back from this step, as one that was likely to give offence to the king's majesty, in that he had bidden Don Juan to remain in Granada awaiting his further commands. But unable to control his impatience, Don Juan had sent Don Garcia de Manriques to Cordoba with dispatches the previous week, and had begged of him to make as swift a return as possible, to tell him in what sort of mood his royal brother was, and whether there was likelihood of the issue of new orders which would relieve him from the intolerable humiliation (as he felt it) of his present position. Nominally in command of the Christian forces against the rebel Moriscos, he was so tied and bound by royal mandate as to be obliged to watch passively whilst the enemy ravaged the whole surrounding district, and even of late had burst sometimes through the very gates of the Albaycin, and had made hostile demonstrations in the city itself, ere the guard could be called to arms and the intruders driven back.

This knock at the door brought a frown to Don Juan's face. He was in no mood to be interrupted. But it was growing too dark to write, and he had long since thrown aside his pen, to indulge in gloomy meditation. Now he strode to the door himself, instead of answering, and flung it wide. A blaze of light from without threw into relief a tall, travel-stained figure. Don Juan uttered an exclamation of joy.

"*Carracho!* it is Don Garcia himself!"

The comrades clasped hands. Don Garcia bent the knee, but was quickly raised by the man who regarded him as friend and confidant rather than as servant.

"Come in, come in! Ah, but you are welcome. I had well-nigh gone mad with mine own musings. Have you heard the news from Galera? El Malek has taken possession of it, though it was one of those cities peaceable and loyal, where that deputation sent forth under Father Christoval received so kindly a welcome and found so safe an asylum. I trow they are yet there; God keep and protect them if they be! El Malek has persuaded the people to revolt. He is master of Galera. By this time, for all I know, he may have captured Guescar. Oh, I have no words to express the shame of heart that consumes me! How long is this to go on—how long, how long? Don Garcia, what news do you bring me from my brother at Cordoba?"

"The best, the best," cried Don Garcia eagerly. "This time of waiting is at an end; the time for action has come."

"Bring lights!" cried Don Juan in ringing tones, and he was instantly obeyed by his servants. The room was soon brilliantly illuminated, and food was brought at the master's order and set before the traveller.

"Eat and refresh yourself, and tell me all the good news. Have you brought dispatches?"

"Nothing but a few lines from His Majesty of personal greeting. The dispatches will come by another hand, and

may be a few days in reaching Granada ; for I travelled with all speed, and raced the snowstorms over the mountains. But come they soon or late, they are on their way ; and when they come, Your Excellency will have no cause, I trust, for dissatisfaction. His Majesty is stung to the quick by the triumphs of the infidels. His tedious methods have at last been accomplished. His slow-drawn schemes are ripe. He gives the word to move, and Your Highness is to be placed in full command as Viceroy, whilst the Marquess de Los Velez is to receive orders to cooperate with you, and to hold himself as second in command under Your Highness."

Don Juan's eyes flashed.

"Then I am to be released from these fetters, these leading-strings, these hampering bonds?" he cried. "I am to put myself at the head of the army, and take chiefest command?"

"Sire, I believe that to be the king's command. He has tried for well-nigh a year to work through a council, where every man gives different advice, and Your Excellency is shackled beyond endurance. That plan has most ignominiously failed. The Moriscos are battenning and fattening upon Christian plunder. The cry of our brethren in distress ascends to the very heavens. It has reached at last the king's ears. The sword will be unsheathed to better purpose now. In the east and in the west Christian soldiers will go forth, and the power of the infidel shall be broken."

Don Juan paced excitedly up and down the room whilst

Don Garcia fell with wolf-like avidity upon the savoury viands set before him. He had travelled almost night and day to bring these tidings to Granada, and his reward was in the triumph and joy which he read in the face of his master and friend.

But it was not Don Juan alone that Don Garcia was burning to see. He had scarce washed down his meal with a tankard of red wine ere he was on his feet again, buckling on his sword-belt, and throwing his long dark Spanish mantle across his shoulders as only a Spaniard can do.

"Whither away so fast, my friend?" quoth Don Juan, his hand upon the shoulder of the other. "I have yet ten thousand things to ask, ten thousand things to say."

"I would crave Your Excellency's leave to absent myself for a brief hour," spoke Don Garcia, with rising colour in his fair yet soldier-bronzed cheek. "I would fain pay a brief visit to the Casa de Aguilar, after which I will come again, and we will talk half the night if it please Your Excellency."

Don Juan's hand was on the bell. At its summons a servant came hastily.

"My cloak and hat," he said briefly; and as the man disappeared he added, "I too will go to the Casa de Aguilar. Don Rodrigo is one of the most far-seeing and courageous of the caballeros of the city; also he may have news from Galera. I trow that Antonio and his wife are there yet. We must seek means of rescuing those who have done such service, now that their work is like

to be undone by the warlike policy of Aben Aboo and the ferocity of the Algerine Turks."

Together into the keen, snowy night strode Don Juan and his companion, Don Garcia's heart beating high at the thought of so speedily seeing his beloved once more.

For by this time Yolante was the affianced wife of Don Garcia de Manriques, and her father in England had sanctioned the alliance, and had promised that the marriage should take place in England, as soon as the Morisco rebellion should be extinguished, and his son and daughter should return home after their adventurous wanderings. At present, with the coasts ravaged by the Barbary pirates, who bid daring defiance again and again to the heavy warships of the Spaniard, it was thought safer for the brother and sister to remain in Granada; and the fighting fever had so possessed Eudo's spirit that he could not have borne to tear himself away from Spain just at this juncture. As for Yolante, her happiness was beyond words. Don Garcia was her own true knight—her very own. She asked nothing more of fate or the world. She prayed night and day for his safety when he was in peril. She believed that the time would come when she should present him to her father and mother and friends in dear, distant England, and be united to him in that union which only death can sever.

She was dreaming of her lover as the family party sat together in one of the beautifully-decorated apartments of that part of the Casa de Aguilar which formed the winter quarters of the family. Huge fires of fragrant pine and

cedar blazed upon the hearths; the hangings were warm, and soft, and rich; the marble floors were strewn with rich-hued carpets from Eastern looms, or by the warm skins of the wild denizens of forest and mountain.

Indeed, the houses of the nobles and caballeros of Granada were more full than ever of costly and beautiful things. Some had brought home spoil from the wars wherewith to adorn them, whilst others, like Don Rodrigo, had made large and munificent purchases of household stuffs from the unhappy Moriscos who had been banished from their homes in Granada, being forced to sell such possessions as they could not take with them for what they would fetch by auction; and had it not been for the high-toned and generous action of a number of Spanish gentlemen, encouraged by Don Juan himself, who bid freely one against the other, those rich and sumptuous plenishings and valuables would have gone for almost nothing.

Doña Magdalena reclined upon a pile of richly-embroidered silken cushions, while her husband sat beside her, some papers in his hands, from which from time to time he read extracts aloud. Eudo was playing chess with Inez Arroyo, while Juanita looked on with eager, laughing eyes, making suggestions and offering advice first to one and then to the other player. Inez was almost like a member of the family now, having taken the place of instructress to the two young children, whose education was now progressing rapidly under her care. Her mother had been taken with a fever during the summer, and had

died within three days, and her uncle the priest had joined the mission of Fathers Christoval and Albotodo to the Moriscos, so that Inez was left quite alone and unprotected in the world. But she had already won for herself a place in the affections of this household. Her heroic courage at *Istan* had won for her a decoration of honour, which had been given her by Don Juan himself when the story came to his ears, and she was regarded in this house rather in the light of a friend than a dependant; for although by birth but a girl of humble rank—the daughter of a citizen—there was good blood in her veins, and she had received from the uncle with whom much of her time had been passed an education far in advance of that of most Spanish maidens of whatever rank in life. *Yolante* had found it easy to make a friend of her. She had been attracted to her from that first meeting on her journey to *Granada*. Now they were almost like sisters in thought and affection, and it sometimes crossed *Yolante's* mind to wonder whether some day that bond of sisterhood might not be more closely drawn.

But her own dreams for the most part filled *Yolante's* brain, as to-night, when she sat gazing into the glowing fire, her hair ruffled by the games the children had been playing till carried off to bed, her eyes bright with the thoughts of her lover and hopes of his speedy return. She knew he would hasten back from *Cordoba* as soon as his task there was accomplished; and Don *Garcia's* friends had come to know by this time that grass never grew under his feet.

The curtain was swept aside. Yolante started up. She had heard a footfall behind that of the servant; she could scarce restrain herself from springing forward. She stood in a graceful, eager attitude, her hands clasped, her eyes shining like stars.

“His Excellency and Don Garcia de Manriques!” spoke the servant ceremoniously, and all sprang to their feet. The lovers were able to secure for themselves, during the welcome accorded to Don Juan, a few happy moments for personal greetings unobserved and unheard.

Everything seemed to swim in golden radiance before Yolante’s eyes, and nothing was clear save her lover’s face, turned first upon her alone, but afterwards towards those who were so eagerly asking questions of him. It was his voice which became clear to her at last as she took in the sense of what was passing.

“Yes, there is to be concerted action at last. The Duke of Sesa is to operate in the west through the Alpuxarras; but we are to make our campaign to the east in the Almanzora, where the peril is menacing with even greater gravity. If the Moriscos of Murcia should rise, as Aben Aboo’s emissaries are seeking to incite them to do, then might there be such a conflagration as Spain has scarce known before, and the scenes we have seen in the Sierra Nevada of the south might be repeated under the shadow of the Pyrenees. Los Velez, who came with such gallant show to protect Murcia and the Almanzora, sits sulking now in Calahorra, and will not be moved to action, though his army is fast melting away in disgust at such sloth.”

“Ay, he has been jealous ever since the appointment of Your Excellency,” spoke Don Rodrigo. “He desired the supreme command. He is not one to share honours with any man.”

“Yet he might well have had all the laurels for his own crown,” spoke Don Juan, a little bitterly. “Here have I been tied by this council and by the king’s mandates, scarce able to move hand or foot; whilst he with his army might have been clearing out the rebel hordes by hundreds from the passes, and winning fame and renown for himself and his soldiers. But enough of what might have been and is not. Don Garcia brings word that at last this season of idleness is to cease; that the shackles which bind me are to be loosed. I shall lead forth an army at last. I shall meet the Moors in the field of battle. Heaven send us strength and power to avenge the death of our brethren upon them!”

“You will leave Granada, then, Your Excellency?” spoke Rodrigo. “You will take the army with you also?”

“I shall leave some four thousand men to garrison the city. I shall call upon the nobles of the adjoining districts to gather to my standard with all their following—for that is the backbone of a victorious army—but I shall lead the soldiers in person. I will willingly co-operate with Los Velez, if such be His Majesty’s pleasure, for he is a veteran of renown, and learned in the arts of war; but if His Majesty will that the supreme command be vested in me, I shall not shrink to take the lead in person. I ask nothing

better than to head an army, and show what Spanish valour can achieve."

His eyes flashed; his tall figure seemed to expand. He had striven after patience and obedience to his royal brother's mandate; but he showed already how irksome was the restraint from which he had so long suffered.

"Your Excellency, there is one task which must needs be accomplished ere you and the army leave Granada," spoke Don Rodrigo.

"I know it," was the quick response: "Guejar must be destroyed. That stronghold of rapine and rebellion must be levelled to the ground. We must leave behind us no nest of warlike robbers within a day's march of Granada. We have suffered too much from the insolence of wandering bands, who find shelter and support in that stronghold. Our first blow must be struck at Guejar. After that we will march into the valley of Almanzora, and Galera shall soon see the banner of the Cross floating over her walls and towers."

"Galera will be a hard nut to crack," spoke Eudo, coming forward. "Antonio speaks of it as a wonderful city, cut out of a hillside, made of natural terraces and fortifications, which, even if battered down one by one, would scarce affect the destinies of other portions of the fortress. A little while back, and the people of Galera were peaceful, submissive, ready to listen to words of appeal, ready to submit themselves to the King of Spain. But when the news was brought, first that the men of Granada who were Moriscos were to be banished to other places, and

later that the women and children were to follow—all peaceable and loyal subjects of the king; and when at the same time El Malek and his warriors came and persuaded them with burning words and fiery zeal, they first wavered, and at last threw in their lot with their brethren of the faith. And now the work of the mission seems to have failed, for the war must be waged to the bitter end, since His Majesty will listen to no counsels of moderation and peace.”

“Is that what Don Antonio says?” questioned Don Juan quickly.

“In effect that is so, Your Excellency,” answered his father; “and now in very truth the day for moderation and peace-making seems to have gone by. Aben Aboo, this new king, is of a different mettle from the last, and the policy of our captain-general has not found favour with others; already it is forgotten by the Moors, whom once it went far to bring back to their allegiance. The sword is now the only weapon left, and to smite hard and fast is the most merciful policy now; for the sooner this terrible warfare is brought to a close, the better will it be for Christian and Moor alike.”

* * * * *

The darkness of a winter's night was upon the mountain defiles as Don Garcia, at the head of a few hundred picked horsemen, wound his cautious way towards the rocky fortress of Guejar.

Don Garcia was in command of all the cavalry which was to be used for the reduction of that robber stronghold,

and in his band rode Luis de Marmol and several other of his chosen comrades, together with Eudo Montara, who, well mounted upon a light Spanish barb, was the most excellent of scouts. He had spent the greater portion of his time during these months of idleness in scouring the whole district round Granada, often at considerable personal risk from bands of roving Moriscos, till he knew every turn and twist of the rugged ravines better than almost any caballero born and brought up in the district.

The Duke of Sesa was leading the infantry and artillery by one route; Don Juan was to take another along a parallel ridge of heights. They hoped at break of day to meet at the appointed spot, and to sweep all before them by sheer weight of numbers. The policy now was to strike quickly and strike hard. For the future half measures were to be avoided.

The moon had sunk beneath the crags, and grim darkness reigned; but Eudo knew where they were, and that at the next bend in the road they ought to see the beacon-fires which the Duke of Sesa was to light as he went along, as a guide to Don Juan and his party. He rode on ahead cautiously in the gloom, and uttered a low shout of triumph as he saw the twinkling lights beneath, marking the path of the foot-soldiers creeping up and up towards the mountain eyrie.

The dawn was just beginning to tinge the eastern sky when the horsemen, guided to this point by Eudo, paused on the brow of the hill and saw what lay before them. Guejar was now a little below them, and there was a pass-

ably good path to it, where three or four horsemen could gallop abreast. The foot-soldiers were creeping up from below, and so far all was wrapped in silence and gloom. The garrison of the stronghold, unsuspecting of attack, appeared to be sunk in slumber, and not even the fires lighting up the rugged ravines and valleys seemed to have roused them to any sense of peril.

The little band of cavalry posted on this height watched with beating hearts the approach of the army. Not a sign was to be seen of Don Juan or his contingent by the other route; but on a sudden there was a shout, a challenge, the sharp report of muskets, and then the whole fortress in the hills seemed to awaken like a hive of bees disturbed, and the whole place buzzed with life.

Don Garcia set spurs to his horse, and with a bound placed himself at the head of his men. The first gleam of the rising sun lighted his golden hair and brilliantly blue eyes, and glinted with dazzling glow from off his silver breastplate. He looked like some veritable paladin, and his men ranged up behind him with a shout of "Santiago! Santiago!"

Down the rocky defile thundered the horses' feet. The shouts of the riders made an echoing tumult, and the rocks rang with the confusion of sound. The Moriscos, taken by surprise front and rear, had scarcely realized the presence of the approaching foe ascending from the lower ridges before they found themselves set upon in the rear by a charge of horsemen bearing all before them. They had rushed forth shouting, "Allah, Allah! slay, slay!" But

their yells were silenced by the stern blows of the mailed foemen they encountered. Their ranks turned and broke. With shouts and curses they fled hither and thither, pursued by the horsemen, cut down, flung over the rocks and precipices.

“Forward, caballeros! slay, and spare not!” shouted one and another, as the lust of fighting came upon them, together with the remembrance of all that their Christian brothers had suffered at the hands of the infidels, and how they had been, as it were, held back this long while from vengeance; and the light, active horses, responding to the cries of their riders, dashed hither and thither amid the flying Moriscos, dealing death and destruction in their path.

Already the Crescent had been torn down, and the Cross proudly planted in its place, when Don Garcia, as he rallied a small number of his men, who had been pursuing far into the mountains, caught sight of the banners of the approaching band, led by Don Juan in person.

He rode up, saluting his commander, and told how that already the place had been taken, and that the Moriscos were flying in all directions.

The face of Don Juan was somewhat stern as he turned towards the caballero Don Diego de Quesada, who had acted as guide.

“Why were we not here, señor, to take our share in this?” he demanded. “Surely you have brought me by a longer route than you did promise?”

The young man’s eyes fell, and he crimsoned all over;

but before he could speak, Quixada himself had stepped forward—the noble old man who had been as a father to Don Juan—and he it was who made reply.

“Your Excellency, blame him not. It was my command. I feared lest your sacred person should be too much exposed to danger. I did bid him to take the longer route, that—”

Don Juan fixed his eagle eye upon the speaker, and his voice was very quiet as he made response,—

“My good friend and father, let there be an end of this. If you regard me as your commander, obey me in this. I am no longer a child; I have reached man’s estate. I am here to do His Majesty’s pleasure, and I will do it at the cost of mine own life if need be. Henceforward, whoever seeks to rob me of my due share of peril or glory is doing a wrong to the king’s majesty.”

Don Juan rode in to Guejar to set there a strong little garrison, but he would stay neither to eat nor to drink, and immediately returned to Granada.

CHAPTER XVI.

GALERA.

IT lay like a stranded vessel upon the fertile plain; small wonder, thought many an approaching traveller, that it had won for itself the name of Galera.

The eastern portion of the mass of rock rising abruptly out of the fertile Vega, where the rivers Huescar and Orce meet beneath its beetling crags, bears a rude resemblance to the stern of a great galley, raised high in the air, whilst the imaginary vessel lies with its prow upon the ground in the fertile alluvial soil near the junction of the rivers. The lofty eastern portion was in those days crowned by a frowning castle and by fortified houses, each one almost like a miniature fortress, whilst buttresses of solid masonry jutted out from the rock at every vulnerable spot, and a strong flanking wall was built wherever the steep sides of the crags permitted. The houses themselves hung upon scarped ledges, and could only be approached by steep tracks more suited to the feet of goats than of men, or by steps cut in the living rock. So precipitously did the hill rise that the roof of one dwelling was on a level with the foundation of the next. They

were for the most part of solid stone on this side, and for windows had narrow slits more like loopholes. The whole place seemed to bristle with fortifications; and from the summit of one of the turrets of the castle the bleaching skull of the ill-fated officer of Los Velez, Don Leon de Robles, seemed to grin down a terrible menace upon any approaching foe.

Such was the aspect of the hill to the south and east; but towards the north-west there was a more gentle downward slope, where a certain number of houses extended irregularly towards the plain. There they grouped themselves about the church which the Christian population had built, and which possessed a high and strong belfry tower, which was now utilized as a fortified citadel. This lower part of the town was far less strong than the upper portions built upon the rock, its walls and houses being constructed in great measure of baked mud mingled with stone. But even if this entire quarter should be demolished or taken, it would have small effect upon the upper city; for the narrow and steep roadways leading from one to the other were protected by strong barricades placed at short distances, whilst every house could pour a deadly fire upon any approaching foe daring enough to advance into the network of narrow, tortuous streets.

In addition to all other defences, Galera was amply provisioned with grain and other stores; and a solid covered passage had been constructed to the river, so that, whatever the foe might do, an ample supply of water could always be obtained without risk.

No wonder that El Malek had worked might and main to arouse in the peaceable population of Galera the spirit of rebellion and resistance. He knew that such a place would be hard indeed to take, and that Christian blood must flow like water ere it should fall. Indeed, he believed it totally impregnable; and it was small wonder, after the recent Morisco successes in the Alpuxarras and other districts, that all Moslems should begin to believe that the tide of warfare had turned at last, and that the Crescent was once more to triumph over the banner of the Cross.

Esther de Aguilar and her husband were riding along the fertile Vega which lay beneath Galera. Their faces were grave, and they talked earnestly together as they rode.

“Antonio, what think you of it all? Will our labour be all lost? Oh, I had thought that here in Galera we had found those whose spirits were moved by the gospel of peace, whose hearts were turning towards the true faith, and who were prepared to submit themselves to the powers that be—the powers of law and order—and resist the spirit of rebellion, which is bringing such misery upon the land. Ah, why was it permitted to El Malek to come and rouse the passions of the people before disposed to peace? He will but persuade them to their ruin; for when the king arouses from slumber and strikes, he will strike hard. And, alas, what will become of our little band of converts, who, if gently nursed and tended and led, would have become faithful servants of the Cross?”

"We must seek to hearten them by our presence amongst them," answered Antonio. "It is true that they are wavering sadly. The tales—some of them all too true, I fear—brought them of the edicts of banishment and dispersion pronounced against loyal Moriscos, make it hard work to persuade them of the clemency of the king. There is truth, doubtless, in what His Majesty says—that in these disturbed and rebellious districts loyal Moriscos are not safe, since the Spanish soldiers cannot discern between Moor and Moor; and therefore to send away the peaceable inhabitants into other parts of Spain seems right and reasonable to the king and his counsellors, I doubt not. But to the poor banished people it seems like ruin and exile—punishment almost worse than death. We must not greatly wonder that they are easily persuaded to take up arms again against the Christian foe. Alas that the gospel of peace should come to them under the guise of fire and sword!"

"I love my people!" cried Esther, turning to look at the white hill behind, just incrustated and sparkling with the light fall of snow. "I cannot but regard them in some sort as mine own. I lived amongst them in my childhood. I know their faults and follies, their blindness of heart and savage ferocity when roused; but I know, too, how gentle and kind of heart they can show themselves: and here in Galera, where they have lived at peace for long, and mingled with the Christian population in marriage and friendship, they seem more than ever mine own brethren; and we had thought to gather much fruit here."

Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke; for the little band of missionaries—if such they could be called—had found in Galera soil suited to their purpose, and had formed, as it were, the nucleus of a little Christian band of earnest brethren, bound together in bonds of love, ready to spread themselves abroad and seek to persuade others to peace and submission and adhesion to the cause of Christ. Then, like a meteor falling from the sky, the Algerine Turks, headed by El Malek, and bearing mandate from Aben Aboo himself, came sweeping through the plains of the east into Galera itself, and aroused within the breasts of its inhabitants the fierce spirit of resistance, which was always ready to spring into life when any hope was held out of the ultimate triumph of the Crescent.

“My beloved, I know that your heart is sorrowful; but methinks the lesson we must all learn in life is not to hope too much to see the fruit of our toil. We sow, but another will reap. We may see nought but failure, but perchance in the life to come we may learn that our toil has not been altogether thrown away. The Lord looks down from heaven. He knows the secret of each heart and the travail of each soul. Let us not seek more than this, that day by day we have grace and strength to do that which He would have us do, leaving results with Him.”

“Yes, my husband, that is what we must do,” spoke Esther, with sweet gravity. “But, alas, my poor Morisco friends and brethren! What will become of them in the day of vengeance?”

“See yonder,” cried Antonio, suddenly breaking off the

reply which hovered upon his lips—"see yonder comes your father. He rides in haste, as a man bringing news. We have not come to-day in vain in search of him. He is here at last."

The next minute a small party of mud-stained riders, headed by Ben Abner himself, now wearing his robes again and a turban about his head, reined up on the plain and exchanged greetings with Antonio and his wife. Then those three rode slowly on together, the servants falling behind out of earshot.

"Father, what news do you bring?" asked Esther anxiously.

"It is even as we have heard, my children. All hope of peace is ended. Don Juan himself has taken the field. Guejar has been razed to the ground. All Moriscos found there have been slain. And Aben Farax, who for a moment acted the part of leader of the insurrection, has met his fate at last."

"Aben Farax! ah, I remember him," spoke Esther. "It was he who strove again and again to incite the Albaycin to rise and overrun the city of Granada. I had not heard of him for long. Methought he was surely dead ere this."

"I heard the outline of his story. He proved too ambitious a subject for Aben Humeya, and he degraded him at last to the rank of a common soldier, instead of giving him command. He was ever to be found where there was fighting to be done or booty to be secured, but his ferocity made him feared of all men; and after the fall of

Guejar he fled with a comrade to the mountains, and there, spent by hunger and fatigue, and hopeless of escaping their foes, they thought of delivering themselves up to the Inquisition. But in the night Farax's comrade rose by stealth and set upon him, and sought to slay him by battering him with a great fragment of rock, thinking to gain a reward by procuring his death. He left him for dead, and fled and gave word of what he had done. But he has gained little for himself, since he is a prisoner now in the hands of the Inquisition; whilst *Aben Farax* was found, not quite dead, by a party of *Moriscos*, who have carried him away to some mountain fastness of theirs. He will never have his reason again, if he have his life. He has met a fate which is almost worse than death."

"And what will be *Don Juan's* next step?" asked *Antonio*, with breathless interest. He was divided in mind—one part of his being urging him to fly at once to take his place beneath the standard of the young commander; the other holding him back, whispering that here was work for him to do, and that the little band of Christians and half-converted *Moriscos* in *Galera* would be in sorer need of Christian champions and soldiers than ever any outside ranks could be.

"He is to march to *Guescar*, to join with *Los Velez*," answered *Ben Abner* gravely, "and together their armies will move through the district of the *Almanzora*. Already they are talking of the resistance to be apprehended at *Galera*. I trow that they have heard of *El Malek's* work

here, and that they will come in force to subdue the city of the galley."

They looked up at the huge crags above them, bristling with fortifications. They saw a small band of red-capped Turkish soldiers galloping towards the city by the lower road, brandishing their lances aloft, and showing by their gestures the utmost excitement. Antonio pointed towards them with meaning glance.

"They are El Malek's men, or soldiers from El Habaqui. Without doubt they too are bearers of this news. They go to rouse within the hearts of the people the demon of anger and fury."

"Ah, let us go back quickly," spoke Esther, her eyes full of tears. "Alas! I fear me it is little we can do. But let us at least be true to our calling; let us be ready to succour the sick, the wounded, the distressed. Galera, I fear me, will see terrible sights ere long. We can do our part that these shall be as little fearful as may be. I trow that we can make of our band at least an army of mercy!"

They pressed along the plain towards the church and gardens of the lower town, Antonio talking earnestly the while to his father-in-law of those things which had happened during his brief absence.

"El Malek has left Galera with a small following, to seek El Habaqui and solicit fresh aid for Galera. He did not expect, I trow, quite so early a move on the part of Don Juan; but he has left many of his most notable warriors behind him with full powers, wherefore things will go on

in his absence as though he were here. They are throwing up fortifications and batteries in the gardens. They are busy everywhere with the work of defence. The whole city is like a hive of bees, all at work, all animated by a spirit of stubborn resistance. I only marvel that they are yet friendly towards the Christian population. They have offered us no insult; they treat us with confidence as friends. Yet they will fight to the death ere they see the banner of the Cross floating from yonder towers."

"I have been musing much as I came hither what it were right for us to do," spoke Ben Abner gravely. "There may be peril for our little company in staying within the precincts of Galera, and as yet we can withdraw without molestation; but—"

"Nay, my father," spoke Esther earnestly, "but let us not leave our little flock in the hour of peril. We could not take them with us; they are not ready yet to be separated from their kinsfolk and brethren. They halt, too many of them, betwixt two opinions; and if we, their friends and teachers, flee from them in the time of approaching peril, how can we look that they should stand faithful? If the shepherd doth flee, the flock must needs be scattered."

"Nay, more," spoke Antonio gravely: "I fear me that whichever side gains the day in the coming struggle, there will be need of a mediator betwixt Christian and Moslem to save terrible carnage. We know that Spanish soldiers can be fierce and bloodthirsty, and that these many re-

verses and misfortunes to Spanish arms have kindled deep resentment within their hearts. They are like blood-hounds chained, baying in their bonds. Once loosed, who can say what they may inflict on their foe if victory comes to them! And we know, alas only too well, what the Morisco can be like in the hour of triumph. If we can do nought but this, I trow we can play the part of mediators. Both Christian and Moslem will listen to our prayers. If needs must, I would present myself before Don Juan himself, to pray mercy for the city should it fall into the hands of his soldiers."

Thus speaking, they wended their way back towards the lower city, where their horses were stabled, though they dwelt with a small community of persons, Christian and semi-Christian, in one of the fortified houses beneath the castle wall.

As they came in sight of the gardens they beheld a great concourse of people assembled—Moriscos of every age and class rushing together, shouting and gesticulating, and passing fierce words from mouth to mouth.

"They are coming, they are coming! the Spaniards are coming. Dogs of infidels! Down with the Christians! They think to take Galera! Let them come and try! Are we not ready? Are we not prepared? Is not every house a fortress? Is not every man a soldier?"

"Ay, and every woman too!" cried a voice like a timbrel shrilling through the air, and out into the open space of the gardens poured a company of Moorish women, strangely caparisoned, in a dress that was almost like that

of the men, and carrying shining weapons in their hands. At their head was an immensely tall and muscular woman with a scarlet and white turban on her head, her brown arms bare almost to the shoulder, and brandishing above her head a shining falchion, which caught the last of the sun's rays, and seemed to form a flashing halo round her head. It was her voice which gave out this trumpet note, and as she moved she broke into a wild chant, full of warlike cries and fierce shouts for vengeance, for victory. Her words were taken up by the band which followed her. For a moment the men became silent before this new clamour of sound. The time had been when the sight of their wives and daughters with uncovered faces in the open streets would have filled them with horror and anger; but a terrible anger was raging now within them, and even the custom of centuries was flung aside as a matter of no moment. After all, the close association of East and West for many generations had done its work in breaking through some of the most ancient and cherished traditions.

"It is Zarzamodonia and her band of Amazons," spoke Esther beneath her breath; "she has been practising them in the use of arms these many weeks and months. See how they march—almost like men! See her tall figure and muscular arms! They say she and her band have prepared more heaps of stones to be flung from the ramparts upon the attacking foe than the garrison itself has done. Look! is she not almost like a prophetess? Ah me, if we could but have won her to our side! Once

I did hope it; for her soul is proud and high, and she longs after the freedom of women, such as she sees amongst us. But I fear it was not the spirit of love which drew her—rather that of ambition. And when El Malek came, and said that she and her Amazons should do even as they would, none interposing to hinder their work, she would hear no more of the gospel of Christ. She would have nothing but Allah and Mohammed.”

The Amazons drew up in the gardens and halted. The Turks stared at them in wonder. But Zarzamodonia raised her voice once more, and desired to know if it were true what she had heard—that the Spanish soldiers were already on their way to Galera.

“It is true! it is true! They are marching under the banner of the king’s brother. They have sworn that they will raze to the ground every Moorish fortress; that they will drive all true believers into the sea; that they will regain all the fair land which once was ours, and make of us slaves and captives. Listen, brothers of the faith—ay, and sisters too! Nothing lies before us but slaughter and death. We shall not be spared; do not think it. They give us fair words; but when we put faith in them, we are betrayed and undone. We are slain like beasts in the shambles. Our wives and our children are sold in the open market. Yea, even in Granada itself has this thing been done—the fair city which we have builded, the place which should be the heart of our kingdom. Brothers of the faith, there is one God, and Mohammed is His prophet. In the name of Allah and Mohammed, stand

fast and fight to the last. Better to die sword in hand than be sold to the galleys, the Inquisition, the prisons of the infidel dogs! But why talk of defeat? Have we not triumphed? Shall we not triumph again? The king Muley Abdallah sends you greeting. He will watch from afar what Galera can do. If hard pressed he will send you help. Allah will be our help and our shield, and our strong arms shall do the rest!"

"Our strong arms! our strong arms!" shouted the women, taking up the cry, led by the trumpet-like voice of Zarzamodonia. "Shall we be sold for slaves? Shall we fall into the hands of Christian dogs? Shall we become a prey for their teeth? Nay, rather will we fight shoulder to shoulder with our husbands, our fathers, our sons, till the last drop of our blood be spent. No more half measures! no more submission! no more surrender! Galera is ours—beautiful, impregnable Galera. We will defend her to the last drop of our blood!"

The cry was taken up and re-echoed from all sides. There were shouts for the king Muley Abdallah, as Aben Aboo was called by those owning his kingship. They cheered for him; for his bold commanders, El Habaqui, El Malek, El Hoseyne. The air quivered with the yells of the excited multitude; and then, just when the noise seemed to have reached its height, there came a curious interruption, and silence fell upon the multitude like the sudden darkness of a tropical night after the sun has dipped.

"The brethren! the brethren!" went round in a

strangled whisper from the crowd, and all eyes were turned in one direction.

Two very tall men, clad in long white gowns like those of the Carmelite monks, had suddenly appeared. Their hoods were thrown back from their faces, and it could be seen that one of the pair wore the tonsure, and his face was white and sunken almost like that of a corpse, save that the brilliant flashing of his wonderful dark eyes and the strange dignity of his whole personality gave contradiction to any idea of lifelessness. The other man wore over his gown a shining breastplate, and on his shoulder a red cross gleamed scarlet in the dying daylight. His hair was long, and flowed over his shoulders, mingling with the dark beard which clothed his face. His eyes also were like wells of living fire, and in his hand he carried a great two-edged sword, which he handled with a wonderful strength and dexterity.

It might need a keen glance at these two men for any of their former acquaintances to recognize them as Don Miguel and Don Manuel of Granada. But Esther and her husband had watched the slow transformation and development which had come to them, and were in close and intimate association with the pair.

"Friends," spoke the monk, lifting his crucifix in his right hand and holding it above his head to catch the gleaming sunlight, "wherefore this tumult and warlike din? Wherefore these curses and menaces against those with whom for so many years ye have lived at peace? O my friends, my brethren, my kinsmen—beloved—let us sheathe

the sword; let us bring to an end this terrible war. There is one God; we are all His children. He speaks by many prophets; but it was His Son who died to redeem mankind, that we might be all one fold beneath one Shepherd. Why should we be warring thus together now? Why are we not at peace, living in brotherly love? Friends, my beloved brethren—doubly brethren to me, who have fought and bled in your ranks ere mine eyes were opened to see the truth—lay down your arms. Let me go forth from this city with loving messages of submission and peace. I will win for you the favour, the pardon, the clemency of the king; I swear it—I swear it by the holy blood of God! Ah, my brethren, let not this unholy strife proceed; let us all be one fold beneath one Shepherd.”

“Ay, let us all be soldiers of one King!” cried the other, as he held aloft his shining weapon. “There is one God, who alone is King. Let us all fight for Him in a holy cause. Put not your trust, my brethren, in Sultan or earthly monarch; put your trust alone in the King of kings. There are foes enough in the world to overcome, without flying at the throats of our brethren. Oh, let us go forth with Galera’s submission to the Christian king, and let peace again smile upon this land. Why should it be dyed with blood? Why should you perish miserably, my beloved brothers? Why should this fair city be destroyed? Why should yonder fertile plain be laid waste with fire and sword? Listen but to my words whilst there is yet time; listen to the words of the brethren of peace.”

For a moment the crowd wavered. Galera itself had been peaceable and loyal, and had had no reason to grumble at the condition in which it had long existed beneath the mild sway of the alcajde Enriquez, who had during his lifetime always been very favourable to the town and its inhabitants. Had it not been for the incursion of the Turks, and the victories in other parts of Aben Abou, and the hopes thus excited, they would have been ready enough to live peaceably and submit themselves to the authority of the king. But now a new spirit had entered into them; the hostile feelings, long slumbering, had awakened to vivid life, and, as though in response to the earnest appeal of the brethren of peace, the band of Amazons broke into wild, derisive cries, the voice of Zarzamodonia taking the lead.

“Peace—peace! who mocks us by talk of peace? It is not peace when our brethren, our fathers, our children are torn from us, dispersed hither and thither, and we helpless women are sold in the open market-place! It is not peace when those who tender submission one day to one of the king’s generals, and thus gain his permission to live in peace, are burst in upon next week by a furious mob of Christian soldiers, who will listen to nothing, believe nothing, look at nothing, but set upon us like wolves upon sheep and tear us limb from limb. Is that our reward for submission? Is that the peace of the King of Spain? Yes, truly, that is it, as hath been proved again and yet again. Listen not to the voice of the charmer! Be not as the hooded snake, that will forget its

venom at the sound of a silver voice! Ye are men. Ye are followers of the Prophet. Ye have no part nor lot with the followers of the Cross. Let us fight to the death! Let us show how that the good ship Galera can ride triumphant over all the waves which the proud Spaniards can cause to beat against it. Arise, men; be strong! Allah will fight for us. Let the word 'peace' no more pollute your lips or delude your hearts. We have heard talk of peace till our soul sickens within us; now let it be war, war, war!"

"War, war, war!" shouted the crowds, which, silenced for a moment by the appearance of the brethren, about whose persons some mystic awe seemed ever to hover, now broke out into wilder shouting than before. The Turkish soldiers went clattering up towards the castle, their red turbans and flaming banners marking the track they took, whilst the crowd pressed after them cheering wildly, and crying death and destruction to all Christian dogs and Spanish soldiers.

In the silence thus created in that open space the brethren slowly drew towards their friends who stood looking on in silence.

"Alas, alas," spoke the tonsured monk, who was known now as Brother Emmanuel, "we have lost our power. We can do no more; it will be war indeed!"

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE WARPATH.

DON JUAN rode at the head of a gallant array of troops. Eager as he was to press forward the campaign, anxious as he was to lose no time in reaching Galera, which he had believed already surrounded by the army of the Marquess de Los Velez, he knew that he must bring into the field with him not only siege guns and an abundance of ammunition, but also large supplies of provisions for his soldiers. The district, fertile though it was, had been swept bare by marauding parties from the army of Los Velez, and by the bands of roving Turks now scouring the country in all directions. Galera was reported to have been so actively employed in victualling itself as to have exhausted the Vega in its neighbourhood. Therefore the progress of Don Juan's arms had perforce to be somewhat slow, since he must needs carry with him great stores, and travel by the lengthier routes available for wheel carriages.

He had taken up his quarters at Baza, to permit his whole army and baggage wagons to come up, and now he was riding at the head of the flower of his army to

meet the other viceroy, Los Velez himself, with whom he had been instructed by the king, his brother, to cooperate in the struggle now to be commenced in the eastern district of the disturbed area of country.

Don Juan's face was grave and a little stern as he rode. Don Garcia had returned with his picked band of scouts, and had brought information of a nature which had disturbed and displeased him. He turned in his saddle, and beckoned to his friend to place himself beside him as they pursued their way.

"You say that Galera is not yet invested; that the marquess is coming in person to meet me at Guescar? I had thought to meet him in his camp, amid the din and strife of arms, the thunder of guns. Was it not certainly told to us that he was closely besieging Galera?"

"Your Excellency, he did for a time beleaguer the city with his forces, but methinks that at best the siege was but half-heartedly conducted; and so soon as the news came that the king had appointed Your Highness to be commander-in-chief of the opening campaign, the marquess broke up his camp at once and returned to Guescar. There he awaits your coming, and it is said he will ride out to meet you in person at the first news of your approach."

"I must give him all courteous welcome, for he is an old and tried warrior, and has done His Majesty much service; but, in sooth, I like not the thought of this desertion of his post. What will the rebel Moriscos think if they see such half-hearted policy on the part of the king's servants and generals?"

"In sooth, Galera thinks herself to be impregnable; and they say the Moriscos there laugh to scorn the idea of Your Excellency's approach. They have taken some pieces of ordnance from Los Velez, and the heads of many of his officers adorn the walls and ramparts. Soldiers who took part in the abortive siege say that it will be no easy task to reduce the place; for it is too well victualled to fear blockade, and too strong to dread assault. Nevertheless, I have no fears but that Your Excellency will find a way of encompassing and taking it. Frigiliana was thought to be impregnable, but yet it fell in one night!"

"And Galera shall follow," spoke the young commander, with a very determined expression upon his face. "We have suffered too much from the arrogance and warlike demonstrations of the Moors. I am here to stem the tide of their successes, to rid the king of these enemies of peace; and I will perform my task at all cost, our blessed Lady and all the holy saints being with us in the work."

Before another word could be spoken, a rider appeared galloping towards Don Juan's cavalcade, and Don Garcia, shading his eyes with his hand, remarked,—

"That is my scout, Eudo Montara, the cleverest rider and the keenest-eyed man in my company. Doubtless he brings us word of the approach of the marquess. I gave him orders to ride in advance, and give us due notice of his approach."

Eudo rode up and saluted. He was a wonderfully

different looking youth from the pallid invalid who had arrived at Granada from England. He had grown in height, and his shoulders were wider, his chest more developed. His face was deeply bronzed by exposure to sun and wind, and the down had come upon his upper lip, changing him from boy to man. He was plainly though richly dressed and accoutred, and came behind none of the Spanish caballeros in grace of horsemanship and manly dignity of bearing.

“You bring news of the approach of the Marquess de Los Velez?” asked Don Juan quickly.

“Your Excellency, yes. He comes in person to meet and greet you. He has vacated in your favour the apartments in the castle of Guescar. He awaits but your arrival to take his departure.”

“For Galera?” questioned Don Juan, with a note of stern question in his voice. “I would he had not quitted that post at all. We must lose no time in pressing thither together. I would that our meeting had been beneath those frowning crags.”

Eudo spoke no other word, for it was not his place to repeat to the commander the things he had heard from the soldiers of the marquess whom he had encountered upon the road. But as he and Don Garcia fell back behind their leader, he spoke with him in low tones.

“Los Velez is about to retire from the campaign altogether. He is furiously jealous of our young leader, and will not serve either with or under him. He has been little better than a traitor to the cause these many

months, having been vastly angry at hearing how the king was about to send his brother to take chief command. He should by this have subdued rebellion throughout the whole region of the Almanzora, and behold he has done nothing but sit idle and sullen, whilst his army has melted away like summer snow. And now when he should be eager to take the field and strike a blow in the good cause, and his soldiers would fain see an end of this long and inglorious idleness, behold he will have no part or lot in it. He is afraid that another will reap laurels which he has been too idle to earn for himself."

"It is marvellous; for in his day he has been a notable warrior, though a cruel one—a man of iron, whom the Moriscos have named the 'Devil's Iron Head.' They will rejoice that he wars with them no more. But his soldiers—what will they do? Will they retire also?"

"Nay; they are burning to join the banner of His Excellency. They will rally round Don Juan almost to a man. They are sick to death of idleness and sloth. They long alike for war and for its spoils. They say that Galera is full of riches and treasure, and that there are above four thousand women within its walls. They look upon these as their rightful prey. The Marquess of Mondejar would not permit Moorish women to be sold in the market like cattle by their captors, where he could avail to stop it; but I know not what His Excellency will rule in such a case."

Don Garcia did not know either. Don Juan's character was as yet only partially developed. Brave and warlike,

he was not cruel; yet he had the stern strain of his father's nature in him, and he was deeply incensed by the outrages which had been perpetrated upon the Christian population of these districts by victorious Moors. What he would do when his turn as victor came could not be known yet.

Spanish and Italian soldiers looked upon the women and children of a conquered Moorish stronghold as being quite as lawful booty as the loot from the houses. Mondejar had often given deep and dire offence by interfering to take under his protection these unhappy creatures, and refusing to allow them to be carried off for sale. It was no easy matter to check victorious soldiery in the heyday of victory. Nevertheless, Don Juan was immensely popular with the soldiers, who believed in him as a commander and loved him as a man. He went amongst them freely. He would taste of their food, examine the condition of their tents, reward any act of courage or endurance with an approving word or a small reward, and cause each soldier to believe himself personally overlooked by the young commander. Already something of this had reached the discontented army of Los Velez, and his men were burning to join the ranks serving under Don Juan.

And now the two commanders came face to face; and whatever might be their private cause for displeasure or jealousy, or disapproval, nothing could exceed the courtesy with which they met in presence of the vanguard of the double army.

The marquess rode up, and made as if he would have

dismounted; but Don Juan checked him by a gesture, and offered his hand, which the old nobleman bent low to kiss. Don Juan spoke first.

“Noble marquess, your great deeds have shed a lustre over your name. I consider myself fortunate in having the opportunity of becoming personally acquainted with you. Fear not that your authority will be in any wise abridged by mine. The soldiers under my command will obey you as implicitly as they obey me. I pray you to look upon me as a son, filled with feelings of reverence for your valour and your experience, and ready on all occasions to lean upon your counsels for support.”

The face of the marquess, which had been somewhat dark and haughty when they met, took a milder expression as he listened to the words of the prince. Again he bowed low, as he replied,—

“Believe me, Your Excellency, there is no Spaniard living who has a stronger desire than I have to be personally acquainted with the distinguished brother of my sovereign, or who would probably be a greater gainer by serving under his banner. But, to speak with my usual plainness, I wish to withdraw to my own house and estates, for it would never do for me, old as I am, to fill the place of a subaltern, even under the command of Don Juan of Austria.”

For a moment the eyes of the two men met, and then Don Juan slightly bent his head. He was immensely astonished at this conduct on the part of Los Velez, but he had no authority to command him to remain. It was

characteristic not only of the man, but of the age, this absolute independence of action. The young commander had looked to receive much counsel and instruction from the veteran with whom he was to be associated in the field, but he showed no sign of consternation or dismay. He merely expressed regret at the loss he would sustain, and at the possible hurt to the king's cause, but spoke no word of reproach or solicitation; whilst Los Velez assured him that any of his soldiers who wished to serve under Don Juan's banners had a perfect right to do so, and he believed the majority asked nothing better.

Side by side they rode towards the castle of Guescar, Los Velez giving to Don Juan much information respecting Galera, and the best method of conducting the siege. But at the gate of the city he paused, and doffing his plumed head-piece, bid the young commander a ceremonious adieu; after which he signed to his own special bodyguard of horsemen to follow him, wheeled about, and rode away through the watery sunset in the direction of Velez Blanco.

* * * * *

In the third week of January Don Juan stood upon the wide and fertile Vega which stretched southward from the hill of Galera, and looked with keen and searching glances at that castellated stronghold, bristling with fortifications, and protected from attack by rugged, precipitous heights, save on the one side, where the belfry tower seemed to stand sentinel against any approaching foe.

Around him stood a band of nobles from Spain and

Italy, all trained in the art of war, all eager to distinguish themselves by valour, and aid him in the difficult task before them.

There was Don Garcia, ablest of cavalry leaders—though there seemed little for cavalry to do against those scarp'd ledges and rocky, precipitous paths where scarce a goat could find foothold. There was the gallant Don Francesco de Molina, who had fortified and held Orgiba for so long in the face of overwhelming difficulties, and had in the end evacuated it in so masterly a manner that he had been able to lead his soldiers back to Granada almost without loss, when it was feared they must be cut to pieces in the rocky defiles of the Sierras. There was Pedro de Vilches of the wooden leg, whose crippled condition had never yet hindered him from showing himself the most able and daring of soldiers; and Luis de Marmol, the friend of them all, the man of the ready pen, whose history of these stirring times has come down to us filled with tales of doughty deeds. There were others, whose names need not be written here, but who played their part gallantly in the struggle that was about to commence, and of whom perhaps the most notable was the bold Pedro de Padilla, who was in command of the Italian squadron, and who had some of the hardest tasks to perform when the time for action arrived.

These warriors, old and young, were pacing to and fro upon the plain, marking the position of the fortified hill, and consulting together as to the line of action to be taken.

The heavy guns had not yet come up, but were ex-

pected every hour. Don Juan looked towards the heights east of the town, separated from the hill of Galera by a gigantic ditch or ravine, both sides of which were almost precipitous, and indicated an eminence there which commanded the castle and a portion of the town.

"It is more distant than I could wish, but methinks yonder place will be the best one for one of our batteries." And they walked this way and that, discussing the question as to whether the shot would carry so far with any deadly effect, but decided that it was necessary to crown those heights with some of their guns.

Then Don Francesco spoke of his experiences in Orgiba, and advised a second battery lower down, where it could be partially sheltered by a spur of rock, and yet play with great effect upon a portion of the fortifications.

"We must needs have our heaviest cannon on this side," he said; "and for the rest, our small ones can play upon the lower buildings yonder, where the church and tower stand. I trow that we shall not have a hard task in demolishing that portion of the town; but this rock will set us at defiance for long, I fear. We shall lose many a gallant soldier ere the ship of Galera strikes her mast!"

"I would I knew what ordnance they have in the city," spoke Don Juan thoughtfully. "I see no muzzles protruding from loopholes, yet they are scarce likely to be without cannon. I would I knew what they had, and where they were placed."

As though in answer to this aspiration, there arose, as it

seemed from the very ground at their feet, a tall figure in the robe and cowl of an ecclesiastic; and as the latter fell from off the wearer's face, several of the group around Don Juan eagerly pronounced his name,—

“Father Christoval de Molina!”

“*Pax vobiscum*, my children,” spoke the ecclesiastic, extending his hand in benediction; whereupon every head was instantly bared. He seemed to have risen from the plain at their feet; but he showed them that he had found a resting-place between two great boulders, and said that he had come out hither with the express purpose of trying to meet some amongst the caballeros with whom he was acquainted, and with his kinsman De Molina, if possible, to give them welcome, and tell them such things as they would need to know; though he himself must keep well hidden from the eagle eyes of Moorish sentries, else his life would not be safe for a moment upon his return.

“Then why return?” spoke Don Juan quickly. “Remain here with us, my father, where you will find protection and safety. Why return to that nest of robbers? Tell me, are there any Christians within the ramparts of yonder city? It is time that all such should come forth. Their lives will not be safe, I trow, when once our guns have opened their mouths. If you have been able to come forth, why not all who are with you?”

But Father Christoval seemed by a gesture to dismiss this proposal from discussion.

“I came not to speak of myself or my brethren of the

faith. We have our work to do. We too are soldiers, and must stand to our post. I came to give you warning that Galera is not like that fortress of Frigiliana, which was carried by a strategic stroke—where one unguarded passage was the destruction of its garrison. It is far different with Galera. There is no such unguarded way there. Every house is a fortress. Every street is traversed by barricades. Every window will afford cover for a marksman. Every man and every woman of the place will be a foe. Alas that it should be so! Alas that Los Velez did make bitter enemies of all the citizens, without so acting that the town fell to his arms! All he has done is to place in Morisco hands two or three falconets, whereby you will be opposed on your approach.”

“They captured his ordnance?” spoke Don Juan, briefly and sternly.

“A few pieces; but they are not well provided with ammunition, which will make them less formidable to Your Excellency,” spoke the soldier-monk. “Moreover, they lack powder and ball for their own muskets. They have laid in much store of grain and all manner of food-stuffs, but they have not succeeded in laying hands upon those other munitions of war which they need. El Malek himself has gone forth to seek to convey into the city fresh supplies of ammunition, and to bring more fighting-men to defend Galera, or to harass the besieging force. But for the moment the soldiers within yonder bristling fortresses are but slenderly provided with ammunition. If the siege last long, they must perforce trust largely to arrows, and

stones, and boiling tar, which they possess in abundance. And let not Your Excellency think too lightly of such weapons, for they can do deadly work at close quarters; and of such there is no lack."

Don Juan listened with satisfaction to these words. He talked for some while with Father Christoval anent the condition of the town, and of the desperate nature of the resistance to be encountered; but his heart did not fail him, though he plainly saw that his task would be fraught with much difficulty, and that he must needs lose large numbers of his brave soldiers ere he could hope for success.

"I would that the Marquess de Los Velez could but hear what harm his disobedience and rebellion has wrought," spoke the young commander-in-chief bitterly. "What right had he to abandon his post, after stirring up in the Moriscos the spirit of unquenchable hatred and resistance? The outrages of his soldiers have awakened undying wrath, and their leader's jealous and offended pride has caused him to disgrace his career by this act of insubordination and defiance. What right had he to break up his camp and leave Galera to strengthen itself at ease? Surely His Majesty shall one day know how he has been served by a man he trusted and valued!"

At that moment up rode Don Rodrigo de Aguilar, who had heard that Father Christoval had suddenly appeared in their midst, and was eager to obtain information of his son, whom he believed to be still in Galera.

"Yes, he is there; we are many of us there," answered the ecclesiastic, with a lofty look of courage and devotion.

"In Galera we have gathered much fruit. We have nursed their sick; we have tended their wounded; we have preached the gospel of Christ. And our reward is this, that though the Moors of yonder city, inflamed by their Turkish allies, are roused to a high pitch of fury against all Spanish soldiers and against the armies of the Cross, yet they turn not against us, who have lived and dwelt among them. We are safe; we are even beloved; we are accounted yet as friends. Fear not for your son, Don Rodrigo. He will be safe in that city, so soon to become a city of destruction. It may be he will be safer there than in yonder glittering ranks, which, alas, must soon be broken and scattered, even as waves are broken into spray that dash themselves against the rocks of a hostile coast. Fear not for us. We have our place of refuge, and the Most High is with us. And now farewell. I must not linger longer. Those Turks with the eyes of hawks must not see me parleying with you. Farewell, and the Lord of battles be with you! The cause of the Cross must triumph; but there will be bloody work first, I fear me."

They left the father in his nook of concealment, gazing upwards with a rapt face. He seemed to see into futurity, and to read the skies for portents like an open book. But Don Juan asked him no more. He turned and walked slowly towards the camp, lost in thought. He saw that the task before him would be no light one. Already the boom of a gun rent the air, and was followed by a rattling volley of musketry. The Moriscos had espied

the approach of some companies of infantry, who were taking up their position not far from the low ground on which the church and belfry, the gardens and low-lying houses stood, and already the enemy was giving them welcome. Don Juan threw back his head, and his eyes flashed fire. It was the trumpet note to the war-horse; he scented the battle from afar, and was ready.

A messenger came galloping up with the news that the artillery and baggage wagons were in sight, and the commander quickly called his officers about him, and proceeded to give them their orders. No time was to be lost. The batteries were to be placed with the utmost rapidity and dispatch. He longed with great impatience for the time when the thunder of his guns should awaken the echoes of the ravines behind the hill of Galera. He had learned this much at least—the Moriscos had no great supply of ammunition. They had no way of reinforcing themselves when once the beleaguering army was in position. Whether El Malek was within or without the city—a matter concerning which contradictory reports were circulated—he would by no means evade the cordon which the young commander was about to throw around it. Galera would in future have to look to herself. Neither Aben Aboo nor El Habaqui, nor any other Morisco or Turkish chieftain, could assist her now. She would have to settle accounts with Don Juan himself; and there would be no second blot on the campaign such as had happened when Los Velez deserted his post in dudgeon, and abandoned the siege in disgust.

But the besiegers were quickly made aware that they had no supine or sleepy foe to combat. Scarcely had the guns commenced to move across the plain towards the various positions resolved upon by the commander, than the boom of guns again made itself heard, and the scream of a cannon-ball hurtling through the air showed that their movements and intentions were observed. The shot fell short; the guns were travelling upon a line out of range of the captured ordnance in Galera. But there were other enemies to be reckoned with also; for scarcely had the gun-carriages begun the difficult ascent of the heights, where Don Juan had ordered one battery to be placed, before a band of red-capped Turkish horsemen seemed to rise up out of the very heart of the hills, swoop down upon the gunners and their loaded train, and send a plunging volley of musket-balls into their ranks.

This was Don Garcia's opportunity. He and his horsemen were at some distance, circling over the plain, and seeking to act as a wall of defence between their comrades and any possible attack from roving bands of Moriscos, such as often proved so troublesome and dangerous. The moment the gleaming lances and red caps appeared, Don Garcia formed up in order, and placing himself at the head of his men, rode at a breathless gallop across the plain, followed by his whole troop.

"Santiago! Santiago!" shouted the men behind him, grasping their weapons, and putting spurs to their willing horses.

"Mohammed! Mohammed!" shouted the Turks, as the

two bands met with a shock that made the surrounding hills echo to the clash.

For a few moments the hail of blows descended with deafening clamour. Eudo, just behind Don Garcia, felt himself well-nigh lifted from his saddle by the collision. His horse reared, snorting with excitement, and then cleverly forcing a way through the press, brought his rider clean through to the other side. Wheeling back again towards the *mêlée*, Eudo, lifting his sword in both hands, brought it down upon the head of a gigantic Turk, who seemed to be the leader of the band. He fell forward and rolled upon the ground with not so much as a cry or a groan.

At this sight the Spaniards set up a shout of triumph, and the Turks, seeing themselves outflanked and outnumbered, reined round and dashed away up the steep hillsides, whilst, after a brief pursuit, the Spaniards returned to their own ranks.

“Well done, Eudo!” spoke Don Garcia, his hand upon the shoulder of the youth, who had by fortunate hap struck the decisive blow of the first brief skirmish. “If you go on as you have begun, you will win your spurs of knight-hood before the walls of Galera.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DIFFICULT TASK.

NO time was to be lost. The guns had arrived; they must be set in place. The soldiers toiled willingly to drag them up the steep sides of the ravines, and before long the artillery of Don Juan was booming forth reply to the salute of the two captured cannon taken from his predecessor, but, fortunately for him, neither well placed nor well handled, so that they did little hurt to the army of the besiegers.

Far otherwise was it, however, with the musketry fire from the loopholes of the belfry and the adjoining houses. The Moorish marksmen were true and well trained. Their fire was galling and incessant. The soldiers told off to place the smaller guns in position in the neighbourhood of the lower town suffered much loss from the fire of the enemy. These guns would not carry far, and were, therefore, useless for the batteries designed to play against the walls of the castle and the fortified portions of the city on the heights. For the same reason, the gunners were forced to bring them very near the houses against which their fire was to be directed, and consequently they were themselves exposed to a persistent and

murderous fire from the Moors behind their walls. So heavy was the loss which they sustained, that they were forced to withdraw to a somewhat more distant point till they should have battered down some of the nearer houses which gave shelter to these marksmen.

In addition to this, there were nightly raids upon Don Juan's camp from those roving bands of Turks and Moors which infested the whole district, and, by a perpetual and harassing guerilla warfare, kept their enemies always on the alert, and gave them no rest by night or by day.

So annoying did this sort of warfare become, and so many good soldiers were daily either killed or missing, that the officers put their heads together to devise some plan for ridding themselves of the nuisance.

"Let me," spoke Don Pedro de Vilches, "lead forth a small company of picked men, as though we were about to proceed to the mountains to hunt down and slay all these roving robber bands. Then let Don Garcia with a compact body of horsemen lie concealed in some appointed place of ambuscade. When the roving robbers, with eyes like hawks, see us ride forth, they will gather together, like eagles around a carcass, to oppose and surround me. Then will we seem to retreat before them, and they will follow to the spot where lies the ambuscade. They will all be in disorder, thinking to fall upon us and make of us an easy prey; but at a given signal, or when victory is sure, the horsemen will spring out of hiding, and we will together turn upon the rebel horde and sweep them from the face of the earth."

This plan was approved by Don Juan, and the soldiers heard it with shouts of applause. There was no lack of volunteers for both bands; and just as the eastern sky was growing pale with the coming dawn, Eudo swung himself upon his horse, armed and equipped for the fight, and took his place at the head of his own company, which was soon cantering swiftly across the open plain, concealed by the wreaths of morning mist from the eyes of such sentries as were posted on the rocks about Galera, in the direction of a certain wooded tract of country some few miles distant, which had been the spot agreed upon for the ambuscade.

With much more noise and clatter and circumstance, the band of men under Vilches rode or marched forth somewhat later in the day. He had a few companies of picked footmen, used to the scaling of mountain heights, and he himself with a small body of horse rode with them. They were well aware that their movements were noted by watchful eyes, and they saw horsemen scudding fleetly towards the mountain ravines; but they cared no whit for this. The wider the news spread, the better the chance of success; and with light hearts and eager resolve they marched along the appointed track, passing not far from the point where silently and in ambush Don Garcia lay with his picked cavalry soldiers.

Eudo was crouching beside his leader. The friendship between the two was by this time very true and intimate. It was almost like the tie of brotherhood; and in hours of enforced inactivity such as the present, they would

lie side by side talking not only of the changes and chances of war, but of their own past lives, of their hopes and ambitions for the future, and of those days to which both began to look forward now, when Don Garcia should be free to sail away to England's shores in the wake of Eudo and Yolante, and there begin a new life beneath the freer sway of the sceptre of England's queen.

For there was much in this land of Spain which was repellent to Don Garcia. Loyal soldier as he was, and resolved to fight to the death under the banner of the Cross, yet his soul often revolted within him at the thought of the king's tyranny and meanness of spirit, and at that growing and awful power of the Inquisition which in other portions of the kingdom was making the lives of thinking men a terror and a horror, and sapping away the very foundations of family life and happiness. True, here in the south, amid the strife of Cross and Crescent, the spirit of persecution was directed almost entirely against the infidels. But Don Garcia knew well that as soon as the king and the Church had worked their will upon the unhappy followers of Mohammed, the turn of their own brethren would next come. And to men of his calibre of mind, devout and earnest, yet too wide-minded and large-hearted to be bound by all the fetters of priestcraft, the thought of the future was sufficiently appalling. The king had said himself that he would not stretch forth a hand to save his own son from rack or stake were the Holy Office to find him tainted with heresy; and so narrow were the bounds of orthodoxy becoming beneath the rule

of king and ecclesiastics, that no man of any independence of thought or character knew when he might call himself safe.

Don Garcia, who had talked much with Yolante and Eudo, understood well that their faith would be called rank heresy in Spain. Wherefore he looked forward earnestly to the day when duty would permit him to resign his command and sail away to a freer land, and offer his sword and his services to the royal Elizabeth, of whom he had heard so many things from Eudo and his sister.

They talked of these and many other things as they lay side by side in ambush, awaiting the issue of Don Pedro's advance into the rugged ravines. Eudo told of his home in the fair west country, and spoke also of his longings after adventure and peril, which were being so unexpectedly gratified now. They agreed that they must needs see this struggle to its close; for Don Garcia was pledged by honour and duty, and Eudo by the claims of friendship and his own boyish ambitions, to this present campaign; and their brethren of the faith had suffered too many reverses, and massacres, and wrongs at the hands of the Moriscos for their spirits not to burn within them for vengeance. Nevertheless, there was much in this war which went against the generous impulses of both men, and of many among their friends and comrades; and Don Garcia sometimes said with a sigh that the next time he unsheathed his sword, he would pray for a more just and holy cause in which to use it.

But as they lay and talked thus together, the distant

echoes of the mountains began to awaken to new sounds, and the young leader lifted his head and listened with bated breath.

"It is the clash of arms," he spoke in a low voice, "the sounds of strife and the trampling of many feet. Pass the word, Eudo. Bid the men be ready. Let all lie concealed till the command be given, and then let each to horse, and gallop, lance in rest, upon the foe. Bid every officer look to me; and what I do, let him do likewise."

Eudo slipped through the brushwood noiselessly as a cat to do the thing commanded of him, whilst Don Garcia crept towards the outer edge of the plantation, leading his horse with him. The undergrowth was sufficient to hide an unmounted troop, but when mounted their presence would be visible to any trained scout posted on the adjacent crags; and it was impossible to say how many such there might be, for the whole district seemed alive with spies, who told all that went on in the Christian camp.

Meantime the sounds of warfare and pursuit were growing louder and ever more loud. Don Garcia's practised eyes saw moving bodies of wild Moriscos, some mounted, some on foot, all converging towards a certain point; and sure enough, ere many minutes had passed, he caught sight of the shining lances of his own countrymen, and knew that Don Pedro was drawing them into the ambushade as agreed. Next moment Eudo was again beside him, speaking in anxious tones.

"There are Moorish horsemen pouring down from every side!" he cried. "When they reach the open plain our com-

rades will be surrounded. If we wait till they approach the ambuscade, it may be that we shall have waited too long. They may already be cut to pieces by the Moors."

This was just what Don Garcia himself foresaw. His eyes shone with anxiety and excitement. He swung himself upon his horse, that he might better see the thing which was happening.

Don Pedro's valiant little band was gallantly fighting its way towards the appointed place, and the Moors were pursuing with shouts of triumph. There was no disorganization amongst the Spanish veterans, even when they seemed to be in flight. Don Garcia noted the precision with which they moved, and the accuracy of the line which they took towards the appointed spot. But Don Garcia saw too—what the bold Don Pedro could not yet do—that fresh bands of Moriscos were pouring down from the adjacent heights, and that before he reached the ambuscade he would be completely surrounded.

For one moment he stopped in hesitation. If he showed himself now, the project would not be fully carried out, for half of the assailants would be able to escape back to the mountains; but, on the other hand, the gallant little band, if left to be surrounded, might be slain almost to a man ere the cavalry could surround and surprise the attacking party. Orders were orders; but Don Garcia was a man as well as a soldier, and he knew that Don Juan had allowed him a certain latitude.

At that very moment of hesitation a volley of musket shots awakened the echoes of the ravine, and the horse

which carried Don Pedro de Vilches staggered and fell. The rider instantly sprang to the ground, regardless of his crippled condition, waving his sword above his head, and shouting aloud the battle-cry of the Spaniards as he flung himself upon the foe.

His shout was answered by a burst of furious yells from the Moriscos, and now these came pouring down upon the devoted little band as though to swallow it up and annihilate it.

But Don Garcia could wait no longer. The appointed moment, it is true, had not arrived, but he could not stand by idle and see his best friends cut down like sheep in the shambles. With a short, incisive word of command he set spurs to his horse and bounded forward. Instantly the whole coppice rang to the jingle of bit and spur and the brief words of command, whilst the next minute out upon the plain, in sight of the triumphant Moriscos, there rode a gallant and compact squadron of picked cavalry, galloping straight upon them, lance in rest, ready to bear them down and trample them to death.

The yells of triumph and assured victory wavered and died away as the bands of Moors saw the new foe spring out of ambush against them. The wild inhabitants of the ravines, who delighted in the warfare of the mountain passes, where, secure from attack, they could roll down stones and other missiles upon the heads of their foes, had no relish for meeting them on the open plain, and, at the first sight of the compact bodies of horsemen, fled wildly back to the rocky fastnesses whence they had come.

"After them, soldiers! slay, and spare not!" cried Don Garcia, who well knew the harassing power of these hill rovers in mountainous districts. "Drive them back! follow and slay! Santiago! Santiago!"

They dashed across the open plain to where the fight was raging around Don Pedro's gallant little body of foot-soldiers. The most courageous and determined and well-organized of the Morisco bands were fighting desperately here, undaunted by the approach of the new foe, upon whose proximity they had not reckoned. There were men amongst them ready to fight to the death, and their cries of "Allah!" and "Mohammed!" rang to the welkin as they turned to meet the shock of this new onset.

There was a great green standard flaunting from a knoll, with the Crescent gleaming from its silken folds. Eudo, at the head of his own immediate followers, gallant soldiers every one, filled with the spirit of daring, rode straight for this standard; whilst Don Garcia flung himself upon the struggling mass of humanity fighting around Don Pedro, who was recognized by his rich accoutrements as the leader of the Spanish band.

To reach and capture the standard of the prophet was Eudo's ambition. But the way was barred by a body of red-capped, white-turbaned Turks, who, waving their curved scimitars aloft, sprang with shouts of defiance towards their assailants, so that the two companies met with a shock that caused the riders to reel in the saddle, and flung down the foremost ranks of the Turks into the dust beneath the feet of the prancing horses. Then came

an awful moment of suffocation, confusion, blinding blows, fierce yells, groans and curses of wounded men, the scream of a horse as some bright blade was plunged into its quivering side, men and horses falling, rising, struggling together, the crash of metal, and the thud of hoofs echoing upon the rock.

Eudo, half blinded by blood which ran down his face—whether his own or another's he knew not—but ever with that flaunting standard before his eyes, dashed forward and onward in the teeth of all resistance. His good sword rose and fell and rose again. He knew that more than one assailant had sunk before him and dropped from his path. He felt a rain of blows upon his defensive armour; but it had been forged in the workshops of Toledo and Granada, and though light and as little cumbersome as such covering could be, was well calculated to receive hard blows and show no scratch or dint. His light and active barb, specially trained by himself during these months of enforced idleness, carried him with a skill and swiftness and mettle that showed the spirit of his breed. He came, like Eudo himself, from a "fighting stock," and the instinct both of attack and defence was as marked in the steed as in the rider. He scarce needed pressure of knee or turn of rein to guide him through the press. Of his own accord he sprang forward, swerved, backed, rushed towards a tottering foe, flung at him with iron-shod feet, and galloped over the prostrate form. So Eudo, thus mounted, pressed ever on and on; and now the great green standard was waving over his head, and he was face to face with the

knot of stalwart men who were guarding the sacred emblem from desecration by Christian hands.

Holding the reins between his teeth, Eudo rushed upon these men with his sword raised aloft in both hands. Some of his followers were close behind him; he heard their shouts of "España!" and "Santiago!" But he himself reserved his breath, and flung himself with all his strength upon the tallest of the guardians of the banner. Then came a sensation of blackness and confusion. He knew that blows rained upon him and his following like hail; he felt his horse rear beneath him, and then he grasped his sword afresh and aimed another desperate blow. The Turk went down before him. He knew that he had shot past him, and he wheeled again towards the raging fight. He saw the flashing of swords and scimitars, and felt the stinging of blows and the start of his wounded horse. But then another and another red-capped head went down, and in another moment Eudo's hand was upon the standard itself. He grasped it with his left hand, whirling his sword above his head with the right. A shout of triumph arose from the soldiers about him. It seemed to be echoed from a dozen different points. Eudo dashed the blood from his eyes and looked; and behold the Moriscos were in full flight in every direction, hotly pursued by the Spanish horsemen, who cut them down with scant mercy whenever they overtook them, paying no heed to their cries for pity. It was no time to be encumbered with prisoners; it was a case of killing the victims, or seeing them escape to harass them again another day. Perhaps

it was small wonder that soldiers showed themselves ruthless in such warfare as that. Nevertheless, there were numbers that escaped to the fastnesses of the mountains, although it was reckoned that six hundred Moriscos and some scores of Turks lay dead upon the plain, or along the paths to the mountain passes.

Eudo rode up to Don Garcia with the captured standard, which he modestly presented to his superior. It was the second time that the young Englishman had achieved success, and brought himself into notice by his personal gallantry; and again he received the thanks and praise of his friend and leader.

Don Pedro alone seemed dissatisfied as he came up to join his friend, limping somewhat more than usual through having been much crushed and knocked about in the *mêlée*.

"You showed yourselves too soon, my friend," he said to Don Garcia, shaking his head. "Had you held back but for some short while, we should have pressed nearer and nearer to your ambuscade, the Moriscos would have become more and more demoralized as they saw our numbers dwindling, and when at last you did appear, they would have been too far away from their ravines to have succeeded in regaining them. We—you at least—would have had the whole assembled force as in a trap. Scarce a man of them except those who were mounted could have escaped you."

"That is true, Don Pedro," spoke Don Luis de Marmol, with a short laugh. "Yet it scarce befits that you should

reproach your friend for precipitancy; for had we waited for the true strategic moment, you would assuredly have been lying dead in the press, for the Moriscos had no mind to let the leader of the band escape. We were but just in time to save you as it was."

"I know it," answered the intrepid Don Pedro, with a grim smile. "I should not have kept my feet ten minutes more—perhaps not ten seconds. But what signifies the life of a man like me—and a handful of my followers—if it could have been sold for the heads of two thousand Moors?"

The question provoked a laugh; and Don Garcia, holding out a hand, pressed that of his comrade in arms warmly as he replied,—

"I doubt not that you would have sold it gladly for such an end; yet methinks Don Juan, when I report myself to him, will say that I did rightly in contenting myself with a lesser victory and the life of so bold and tried a warrior."

Don Garcia had not judged amiss. Don Juan was highly pleased with the result of the day's expedition. Three standards were brought in triumph to the camp, the largest being the green silk banner captured by Eudo; and Don Juan personally singled him out for a word of praise and encouragement, and said that if he continued as he had begun, he should mention his name in his own dispatches to his royal brother at Cordova. Eudo cared far more for pleasing Don Juan, for whom he had conceived a great admiration, than for any praise or reward that the

King of Spain might bestow ; still it was an honour that such a thing should be named, and his heart beat high with gratification and pride.

He was surprised how little real injury he had suffered in the *mêlée*. A few slight wounds—scarcely more than scratches in a soldier's estimation—and a good many bruises were all he had received. The next day he felt stiff and sore, and somewhat shaken, but was ready for any task that might be set him ; and he was amongst the first of the cavalry who volunteered to take part in the proposed attack upon the lower town, which was immediately to succeed the bombardment now going on, under the direction of the brave brothers Pedro and Juan de Padilla, with the Italian regiment which had been stationed at this point of the investing lines.

There was little for horse soldiers to do in this attack upon the town, but those who chose to volunteer for foot service were permitted to do so, and Don Garcia soon found that he could bring more than half his gallant band to the assistance of the assailing force.

The work of attack was being pushed briskly forward. The smaller guns played ceaselessly upon the walls of the lower town ; but the gunners were greatly hampered by the accurate shooting from the belfry tower of the church, and Don Juan commanded that trenches should be made and pushed forward nearer and nearer the defences, that cover might be given to those engaged in any dangerous task. He himself set forward for the broom-laden hillsides, and cut and carried his fagots with the common soldiers,

that none might think himself above the hard and unaccustomed labour.

The boom of the heavier guns, directed against the castle and fortifications upon the hill and its many crags, could be heard almost constantly now, and the besiegers hoped that the fire was doing much mischief there, though its effects were not so evident as they would have desired. It was plain that the assault must come from the lower town, where the walls were of nothing like the strength of those upon the hill, where breaches had already been made, and where, after a few more days of heavy firing, they might reasonably hope to effect an entrance without much trouble.

Already there was some falling off in the fire of the besieged. It was possible that ammunition was failing. Soon there yawned several great breaches in the wall, which was of mud as much as of stone. Then the soldiers were set in place, and, under cover of a hot fire from their guns, and a succession of brisk volleys from the arquebusiers, directed at any point where the enemy appeared upon the ramparts, a picked band of Italians and Spaniards swung forward at a brisk pace towards the lower town.

Eudo was in his place amid the comrades who had volunteered with him. A dozen stout fellows from his own troop were immediately around him. They had arquebuses and their own good swords at their side, and such light defensive armour as would not hinder their movements in a rush up the narrow streets towards the citadel of Galera.

The trumpets sounded ; the whole field was in motion : the guns boomed from every battery, and with a shout the soldiers sprang at the breaches, and immediately the fighting began with equal fury on both sides.

“Forward! This way, men! Santiago! Santiago!” shouted a voice that Eudo knew. It was the voice of Don Garcia ; and as he and his band sprang forward in response, they found themselves at a breach in the wall, over which they climbed like so many cats, dropping into the street below, and finding themselves almost within the open space of the public gardens. Here Spanish soldiers were rapidly forming up, whilst their comrades drove the Moriscos helter-skelter into the church and tower and adjacent houses, from whence they kept firing upon them from loopholes and windows, but in a wild and spasmodic fashion that seemed to tell of panic.

And there was reason enough for this panic. For the Spaniards kept pouring through the gaps in the walls by hundreds, and even by thousands. The gardens were rapidly filling with compact bodies of well-trained men, who, instead of separating and dashing hither and thither through a network of narrow streets, as the enemy had hoped, were marshalling themselves in battle array, and quietly surrounding and making prisoners of the Moriscos themselves in the very heart of their own city. The ordnance from the castle perched on the hill above did little or no hurt, even when directed upon the invading Spaniards. They formed and marched and manœuvred as coolly as though upon the parade ground, and soon the

Moriscos were to be seen flying from their places of refuge in the lower town, realizing that they would quickly be surrounded and cut off, and that flight to the citadel and castle was their best chance.

At sight of this attempt the Spaniards shouted with triumph. The soldiers, at the word of command, started in pursuit. Certain bands remained to take possession of the church and tower and vacated houses; the rest pursued the flying Moriscos, who sometimes turned at bay, but more often fled onwards for dear life to those portions of their town which offered better defence.

"Forward, soldiers! follow and slay!" was the command shouted on many sides. The Spaniards had yet to learn what manner of city Galera was, and that the taking of the lower town was by no means the taking of the place.

"Hold back, men—halt!" was Don Garcia's command to those beneath his orders, and reluctantly the soldiers obeyed; for the lust of fighting and of glory was upon them, and they thought that they had only to rush upwards and onwards in the track of the flying Moriscos to win both with ease.

"We have done what was ordered of us," spoke Don Garcia to Eudo; "we have captured the lower town with ease. We have no orders to attempt yonder heights above. Remember what Father Christoval said. Let us not be rash to our own undoing and the triumph of the Moriscos. We have given them enough to make them dread us. To attempt more, and meet with disaster, is not true generalship."

But the Italian soldiers could not thus be stayed. They had rushed onwards rank after rank, and their officers had not sought to warn them. The brothers Padilla saw, but it was too late to draw back; moreover, they were not certain that they desired it. Brave to recklessness, they thirsted for glory and distinction; and after leaving Don Garcia with his Spanish contingent to guard the captured church and tower, and see that no Moriscos returned to retake it, they sped after their men, and soon the sounds of desperate fighting were to be heard from the crags and heights above.

Anxiously indeed did Don Garcia and his companions wait and watch and listen. It was little they could see; for the walls and crags hid the combatants from view, and they could only judge of the severity of the struggle by the shouts and cries and ever-increasing clash of weapons. But only too soon did they begin to fear the worst. Wounded soldiers by tens and scores came running or creeping back, sometimes hotly pursued by Moors, who only turned back at the sight of the compact squares of Spanish soldiers that instantly started towards them. The Spaniards rushed out to meet their allies and ask news of them; and in gasping words the wounded told of the awful things they had seen and suffered—penned like sheep in the narrow streets between high walls and houses and barricades, unable to fight, but a mark for the stones and arrows and bullets of the foe, who rained every sort of missile upon them with merciless precision.

Ere an hour had passed, Don Pedro de Padilla was sup-

ported back covered with wounds, the Italians were flying like sheep before wolves, and only the steadiness of the Spaniards prevented the Moriscos from sweeping the lower town clear of the foe.

All, however, was not lost ; for the lower town was held, with its church and tower, and the adjacent houses were quickly either occupied by soldiers or demolished. But the city and citadel were unconquered ; nay, more, the Christian soldiers had been ignominiously driven from its streets, where numbers lay dead or dying.

Don Pedro de Padilla was carried to his tent in deep distress, as he realized that the fortunes of the day had been rather against than with him.

“ But we will succeed another time, Your Excellency,” he assured Don Juan, who came to see him and hear the news.

CHAPTER XIX.

DISASTER.

DON JUAN was pacing up and down outside his tent, lost in gloomy meditation. The young commander-in-chief was stung to the quick by the repulse his arms had just experienced. He thought little of what had been gained—the lower town, with its belfry tower, which had proved such a source of annoyance and danger when garrisoned by Moriscos. He thought only of the subsequent disaster, and of the gallant knights and soldiers who lay dead beneath the ramparts of the upper town, from which the banners of the infidel still flaunted proudly. The shouts of triumph which they had uttered upon seeing the Spaniards in retreat still echoed in his ears. And he had a yet nearer cause for sorrow and grief.

Just before the commencement of the action, a brave knight of the order of Santiago (or St. James), with the red cross upon his shoulder, had ridden posthaste into Don Juan's camp. He was a kinsman of the Padillas, had heard that they were encamped before Galera, and had hurried there with all speed, arriving just in time to

request of the young commander permission to join in the coming assault.

Don Juan had had some slight knowledge of this knight, so he gladly assented to his request. And scarce an hour had now passed since he saw the corpse of that valiant soldier carried to the tent of his kinsman, covered with wounds from head to foot, as though the insignia he wore upon his shoulder had been the mark for the musketry fire of the foes he had faced in death. The cloud was very black upon Don Juan's face as he thought of the fate of his namesake, Don Juan Pacheco, done to death this very day. And he was half afraid to ask by name after any knight or officer serving under Padilla, the accoutrements and distinctive badges of these making them the targets for attack more than their followers. It was, therefore, not wonderful that his face should brighten with an expression of relief as by-and-by he saw approaching him a little knot of officers and friends, including Don Garcia de Manriques, Don Pedro de Vilches, and Don Francisco de Molina.

"I thank God and our Lady that you are safe, señors," he said, a touch of bitterness in his tone. "I had scarce dared to ask by name for any of my best friends. I would that I had the liberty to lead on my soldiers into these perilous places, for better were it to die face to the foe than to see others perish without the power to assist them."

"Nay, Your Excellency, no general may adventure his life like a soldier, or the officers who must needs lead

them," spoke Molina, with a smile, well knowing how galling to the fiery spirit of Don Juan was the necessity, so often driven home upon him by his royal brother, that he should not expose himself to danger. An older and more experienced general learns this lesson, and accepts his position as a matter of course; but Don Juan fretted at the restraints imposed upon him by royal decree, and constantly brought to remembrance by his ex-guardian Quixada, who was ever at his side to warn him from peril and hinder him from exposing himself to needless risk. Far more congenial to his nature would have been the personal command of a small and gallant band, and a headlong charge upon the foe in the teeth of every danger. But young as he still was, Don Juan knew that it was the commander's place to observe all, rule all, and direct all. Nevertheless the restraint irked him at all times, and especially in moments of repulse. "We look to Your Highness for all," pursued Molina. "Without you we lose our head, our life. Yours the voice to command, the mind to plan. What matter if now and again our brave soldiers be cut down? Is it not their trade? No such fortress as yonder crag was ever taken at one blow. We have done well this day. We have swept the infidels back into their stronghold. The plain is ours, with the tower which was so great a source of annoyance and loss. But we have learned that the city and citadel are not to be carried in one rush. We shall have to take other means ere the castle fall into our hands."

"Ay, truly we shall," spoke Don Juan, as he gazed

gloomily upwards at the scarped crags and fortified buildings perched upon the frowning hill. "Don Francisco, what say you to mining beneath the castle walls? Did you not have experience of such work at Orgiba? How say you? Could not yonder fortress, or its adjacent buildings, be blown bodily into the air?"

The caballero's eyes were fixed intently upon the mass of rock and buildings. His glances measured their strength, their construction, their position upon the rock. He had had experience of this engineering work in his former campaigns. He saw that Galera offered difficulties, but he also saw a way to achieve success. He answered, after long thought,—

"Your Excellency, I trow it might be done—not all at once, perhaps; but piece by piece we may succeed in blowing away the rock and all that it holds, mining beneath first one crag and then another, till such breaches be made as shall give our soldiers easy entrance. I trow that with patience and toil such work might be carried out."

"And yours shall be the task of doing it," spoke Don Juan quickly, with brightening eyes. "To you, Don Francisco de Molina, do I intrust these mining operations. Choose you your men. Ask for what you will need, and it shall be yours. Take every step which shall be needful. Galera shall and must be ours, if we sit before her for a year!"

"I trow a month will be more like the time needed," answered Don Francisco, with a grave smile. "I will gladly undertake the task, and I know that we have with

us in the camp a skilful Venetian engineer, who shall be my assistant in this matter. I believe that if the rock do not prove more hard than we anticipate, it will not be long ere we may hope to win a victory which shall go far to counterbalance our loss of to-day."

Don Juan's face brightened. He set himself at once to discuss the plan of the mine, and the assault to follow upon its explosion; and ere the sun had set upon the day following, a large band of workers were engaged upon their mole-like toil beneath the wall and ravelin of the castle of Galera.

The task proved not so hard as had been anticipated. The workers found that the rock was in places composed of light and brittle sandstone which worked easily, and a long gallery was pierced into the heart of the hill with greater rapidity than its outer appearance would have led men to expect. All day long, too, the guns from the opposite side of the ravine played ceaselessly upon the walls and ramparts of the city, and ever and anon the eager eyes of the Spaniards would behold some fragment of the fortifications tottering to its fall, or a breach yawning in some portion of the walls. Shouts of triumph would then ascend; but these would be answered by yells of defiance from the Moors, and in a short time the breach would be filled up by masses of loose masonry, men and even women appearing fearlessly upon the walls to accomplish the task, hurling menaces and curses at their foes, which, if not heard, were easily understood through the fierce language of vehement gesture.

The month of January had not quite run its course before Molina was able to announce to Don Juan that all was ready for the attack: his mine was laid and charged, and all that was now needed was the word of command to fire it, and see the result.

Long and earnest was the consultation in Don Juan's quarters with his experienced and gallant officers as to the nature of the attack.

"Gentlemen, this time we must succeed," spoke Don Juan earnestly. "To fail in a second attempt would be to give the infidel such cause to scorn and despise the chivalry of Spanish arms that the humiliation would be beyond endurance. This time we go to conquer. Let every man bear that in mind. Galera must be ours. There must be no turning back."

He spoke with flashing eyes, and with the proud gesture of one born to command. His ardent soul was chafed by delay. He was one who yearned after quick and decisive victory. So far he had been forced to submit to much humiliation, much inactivity, much irritation and helplessness. But now he was in command: the foe was before him; a gallant army was at his back. He would conquer or die: that was the thought in his heart.

Don Pedro Padilla, in spite of his still smarting wounds, was in his place at the council. He was again deputed to lead the attack from the lower town. But since his men now knew what kind of welcome they must expect from the Moriscos at the barricades and in the streets of the upper town, they were instructed to take with them

mantelets, to shelter them from the rain of missiles which would assuredly greet them from above as they penetrated into the narrow streets. These mantelets were constructed of wood covered with hides, or with metal—anything, in fact, that would form a sort of protecting roof above their heads. In sieges, the attacking force often crept up to the very walls under cover of huge mantelets, which a score or more of soldiers would bear on back or shoulders as a protection; and smaller ones were carried during the assault, to receive the rain of arrows, stones, and javelins which rained down from the windows and loopholes upon them.

But this attack from the lower town was not to be all. Don Juan himself was to direct a simultaneous attack from the eastern side, as soon as the mine should be exploded, and the breach in the castle and its wall be made manifest. The attention of the enemy, they calculated, would be concentrated upon the attack from the opposite side; but there would be, no doubt, a great number of soldiers left within the castle and its ramparts: indeed, by a feigned attack before the real assault, they meant to draw to the doomed walls as many of the foe as could be gathered there. Then would be given the signal for the explosion, and as soon as the fortress had been blown into the air, four thousand veterans would be ready to rush into the breaches and carry Galera at the point of the sword.

This time Don Garcia was to belong to the contingent under the immediate command of Don Juan, and Eudo

was one of his band. Active as a mountain goat, filled with courage and enthusiasm, ready to do and dare, and if need be to die in the cause of the Cross, Eudo was just in the frame of mind to delight in such a battle as the one which lay before them. He knew that the soldiers and their leaders were less confident of immediate success than was Don Juan himself. Many of them had had long experience of warfare with the Moor, and knew that such strongholds as these were not carried in one or even two attacks. None spoke of failure or defeat, but some averred that it might take more than one explosion to blow Galera into the air ; and when he heard such words, Eudo felt the hot fighting blood boil in his veins, and he longed to be one of the first to reach the breach in the walls, and to tear down the banner of the infidel which flaunted there so proudly. He had come to have an intense enthusiasm and personal love for Don Juan, who had on more than one occasion singled him out for some kind word of appreciation and approval. He felt he would gladly give life and all to distinguish himself in the service of his young commander-in-chief.

And now the longed-for day had come. Eudo stood in his place in the ranks of caballeros and soldiers, lightly armed, that he might the more easily scale the steep paths upwards at the given word, his muscles all tense with excitement, his eyes alight beneath his shining head-piece, his gaze fixed immovably upon that portion of the towering citadel above which at a given signal they hoped to see blown into the air before their eyes.

And now the valley was echoing to the strife of arms from the other side, where Padilla's troops were rushing headlong up the slope from the lower town to the attack. They could hear the clash of arms, the shouts of the opposing forces—"Santiago!" "Cierra España!" on the one side, and "Mohammed!" or "Allah!" on the other. Eudo's breath came thick and fast as he listened. He had known something of that struggle himself. He had been near to those narrow streets, from whence lead and stone and boiling pitch seemed to pour ceaselessly upon the heads of those who dared to venture within. He imagined the press of Spanish soldiers, rushing headlong upon the foe, driving them into their houses, battering down the doors, pursuing them through the upper rooms, and flinging them headlong from the narrow windows upon the weapons of their brethren below. He could picture the fierce struggles at the barricades, as every new obstruction was reached, and the fighting grew hotter and hotter. He seemed to see it all passing in blood-stained hues before his eyes. He strained his ears, to seek to learn something from the confusion of cries as to what was passing over yonder; but—"

Crash!

It came like the very rending of the heavens. The ground beneath their feet quivered and quaked; the great rock before their eyes seemed to shake, and sway, and totter. Upwards into the blue of the clear air rose an immense mass of rock, masonry, houses, ledges crowded with human forms; and the roar of the explosion, and

this awful rending and crashing, did not drown the yet more fearful scream of human anguish and terror as the moving mass sprang upwards and outwards, and then fell crashing with the noise of ten thousand thunderbolts into the gorge beneath, bearing its human load with it.

It was well that Don Garcia and the other officers had posted their men at some distance from the base of the rock. The impatient soldiers had grumbled at the station allotted them, but they saw the reason now. For one breathless moment they stood spellbound by the dreadful nature of the sight they had witnessed, and then with a shout of triumph they sprang forward without waiting for the word of command, and began scaling the heights with all imaginable speed.

Eudo was one of the foremost to rush to the attack. Beside him was a gallant young Castilian ensign, who carried a banner with him, ready to plant upon the walls of the vanquished citadel when it should be theirs. His name was Zapata, and already he and Eudo had struck up something of a friendship. They were much of an age, and had during these past days taken various private excursions together about the rock of Galera, so that they knew just where lay the most practicable paths, and how best the slippery stone tracks might be surmounted.

“Steady, men, steady! Forward! Form up! Keep rank, and go steady!”

These and similar words of command were issued by the officers as the great body of the storming party rushed forward to the attack. The air was thick with dust and

débris; the groans and shrieks of the wounded still rent the air from the direction of the fallen mass of ruin. But the Spanish soldiers now thought of nothing but the glory and the spoil which lay before them, and pushed headlong upwards, regardless of the warnings of their officers to go steadily and look what lay before them. Some, like Eudo and young Zapata, were all ablaze for the glory of the cause; others thought of the rich spoil of gold, jewels, silken stuffs, and stores of all kinds which it was rumoured were laid up in Galera. It was in vain for their leaders to seek to restrain them, to bid them form up, and wait to see what hurt had been done to the walls of the inner citadel by the explosion. The men felt assured of easy victory, and pressed ever onwards and upwards to a great bare ledge of rock swept clean of every Morisco, where they of necessity paused, and even recoiled; for before they had had time to form up, a deadly fire from the castle wall was poured upon them, and with yells of fury many dropped, to rise no more.

The Spaniards had with their mine inflicted great damage upon a portion of the rock, and the Moriscos, in their dismay and terror, had instantly evacuated this outer defence, which seemed tottering to its fall, and had retired within an inner line of defences. This inner line of wall had scarcely been touched by the explosion, save in one place, where a small breach had been made. Whilst the disorganized Spaniards recoiled for a moment before the deadly fire which now assailed them from scores of loopholes and the line of frowning wall, a few bold spirits,

mad with excitement and anticipated triumph, flung themselves towards the small breach they beheld in one spot, and began a wild scramble upwards into the heart of the citadel itself.

Foremost amongst these was young Zapata, and immediately behind him was Eudo. About a score more followed them over the masses of rubble and fallen stones, half choked by dust, hearing nothing but the roar of the falconets and the sharp rattle of musketry round them, the shouts of the Spaniards, the yells of the Moors.

No one seemed to heed this little party, storming the breach so gallantly, so hopelessly. Their breath came thick and fast. Eudo could see nothing for the smoke, the dust, the reek in the air. He scrambled, sword in hand, after the cat-like Zapata, and then all in a moment they found themselves within the citadel itself, and young Zapata had planted the banner of the Cross upon the walls they had surmounted.

“For Christ and our Lady!” shouted the clear, boyish voice; and for a moment the breeze unfurled the flag, whilst the valley below seemed to echo from end to end with a mighty roar.

Then in a moment a whirlwind seemed to descend upon them. Eudo’s sword flew round his head again and yet again. He was surrounded by a ring of furious faces; the air scintillated with the gleam of shining blades; he heard a groan close beside him; he saw the banner tottering to its fall. Something seemed to tell him that Zapata was slain; his own turn would be next. He

was alone, cut off, surrounded by hostile foes mad with fury. He wielded his sword still, but his strength was ebbing. He had not felt the smart of wounds, but he knew he was bleeding. He thought of his mother, of Yolante, of Inez—a thousand visions swam before his eyes—and then he felt himself falling. Was that the end? He would have liked to see the banner of the Cross floating over Galera ere he died; but—

“Stand back! He is mine! I claim him!”

Eudo could not see—everything was fading away—but he felt as though he knew the voice, which spoke in commanding tones; and he understood enough of Arabic now to know the meaning of those words, and of the exclamations which immediately followed.

“It is the Brotherhood of Mercy! Let him have the boy; he has done more for us. Come, men, fill up the breach. Waste not time over senseless clay. The Christian dogs are still mustering against us. Allah! Allah! Mohammed! Mohammed!”

With a great effort Eudo strove to open his dim eyes. He saw a face he ought to know bending down over him. He felt himself half lifted by a strong arm. Then a sharp thrill of pain passed through him, and he remembered no more.

* * * * *

Yes: the Spaniards were still fighting furiously upon the crag they had gained; but, alas, it was to find themselves falling back, baffled, beaten at every turn. It was only too true the warning they had received from Father

Christoval. Galera was so curiously constructed that the demolition of a part produced little effect upon the whole. The breach once stopped which led further into the fortifications, and behold their task was all to be done again. Six hundred Moriscos and a number of houses, turrets, and portions of the outer wall had been blown into the air, and lay a mass of ruins in the gorge below; and yet here was a new citadel to be taken, rearing its ramparts before them, and every loophole was a death-trap for the advancing army. The Moors quietly waited till their enemies came within easy range, and then shot them down like dogs.

Don Juan, from his post upon the opposite heights, was watching with breathless interest the progress of events. He had seen the great explosion, and the vast portion of rock blown into the air, followed by the rapid and headlong advance of the storming party, and his heart had glowed with triumph, and with the anticipation of a speedy and unqualified victory. Despite the news which came to him from others posted upon the opposite side, that Padilla and his men were again caught in a network of fortified streets, and were falling in appalling numbers at the hands of the Moriscos, his heart was full of anticipated triumph; for upon this side, at least, he thought he saw his way to the capture of the fortress, and, the citadel once taken, his soldiers would soon check the slaughter of their brethren in the streets of the town, and bring them speedy aid.

And now the flag—the Christian flag—was flying from

the ramparts. A cheer that rent the firmament went up at the sight, and the youthful commander-in-chief bared his head in thankfulness and praise. But, alas, scarcely had it waved aloft ere it was torn down; and now the anxious eyes of the spectators beheld a terrible scene of slaughter. The Spanish army was not only checked in its advance; the men began to drop in their tracks—to be mown down rank by rank by a murderous fire. In vain they re-formed and flung themselves against the walls, hoping by sheer weight of numbers to force an entrance; again and again they were driven back, and the eyes of those that saw most clearly noted how rapidly the small breach in the masonry of the citadel was being filled up, and how futile was the attempt that was made to obtain entrance thereby.

Reinforcements had moved forward over the plain, but only to be met by a steady and galling fire from the citadel. The Moriscos seemed ready for them at every point, and Don Juan ground his teeth in rage as he saw the gallant struggle on the one side, and the relentless butchery on the other—his own men exposed, the enemy concealed behind walls and within fortresses, every shot from them telling, whilst the fire from his own soldiers fell harmless.

The colour ebbed from the young commander's cheeks. The hardest task of the day was before him. It was with the face of a corpse that at last he gave the order,—

“Sound the recall! Sound the order to retreat!”

All knew it must come to this. The fortunes of the

day were with the Moriscos. The Spaniards had, as before, won something, but they had not won all. They had been pulled up short, and it was madness to proceed. Their triumph lay in that mass of ruins in the gorge beneath, where hundreds of the foe lay dead and dying; they would only court fresh disaster by persevering further. The fight must be stopped ere Don Juan lost the flower of his army. Already the news came that every officer in the Italian contingent had fallen, including Don Pedro Padilla, who had received yet more wounds, no one knew whether or not of a mortal kind.

But it was one thing to sound the recall, and another to get the maddened soldiers to obey. The Spaniards were almost as much stung by their repulse as Don Juan himself. They had heard his words that the assault was to be made without flinching or turning back. Like mastiff or bulldog that has tasted blood, they only longed to hang on to the mangled victim and shake the life out of him. They could scarce believe the testimony of their own eyes, in their own dead and dying. They had seen a great portion of the fortress blown into the air; it seemed impossible after that that they could be repulsed.

Don Juan saw with displeasure and dismay—perhaps not untinged with a certain admiration—that the fight still raged fiercely, that the men fought on in the teeth of death and disaster, whilst the recall fell upon deaf ears, or ears that would not hear.

“My horse!” he cried, in a fury of excitement. “If they will listen to nothing else, they will listen to me.

They are brave and gallant soldiers every one, but they must not perish like sheep. We will have Galera yet, but it cannot be to-day."

He saw it himself now. All his soul was stirred with a great wrath, a great humiliation, a great admiration and tenderness for the brave men who followed him. It was useless for those about him to remonstrate with him now. Quixada relinquished the task in despair. Deeply as he loved the youth who had been his charge from boyhood, he began to feel that now he was growing beyond his control, and that the king's command to him to keep him out of danger was becoming too heavy a one for him to fulfil.

Don Juan, with his staff about him, descended quickly into the plain, and galloped across in the direction where the fight was raging most fiercely. He might not perhaps intend to storm the heights himself—who could say?—but at least he would in person join the outer ranks of the army, and see whether his word of command could draw the men from the fruitless struggle and the fruitless carnage.

The noise of the battle was in his ears. The whole place was ablaze with shot, and the echoes of the mountains seemed to ring yet in their ears. Pressing forward towards the ranks, Don Juan suddenly reeled in the saddle; the horse he was riding dropped under him. His followers, with cries of terror, dashed up to his side. Quixada was instantly on his feet, and the next moment Don Juan freed himself from the horse, and looked about him with a calm smile.

A musket-ball had struck his cuirass with great force ; it had glanced off the well-tempered metal, and either that ball or some other had struck the horse in the shoulder, causing it to fall heavily. The risk was greater than any liked to think of. Quixada's face was as white as death, and already the rumour was flashing through the ranks that Don Juan had fallen—was perhaps dead. This effected what the word of recall had been unable to do. The soldiers, sobered and affrighted by the possibility of such a misfortune as this, became amenable to discipline, fell back into rank, and retreated to their quarters in the plain. The fire of the Moriscos instantly ceased. In all truth, though for the moment victorious and triumphant, they had sustained a crushing misfortune in the death of some six hundred of their number, blown to pieces in the explosion, and their ammunition was running very low. This day's fighting had cost them dear, though they had beaten back the hated foe, and their banner yet waved over Galera.

But it was no wonder that black darkness seemed to fall upon the spirit of Don Juan as he heard of the irremediable losses he had sustained in the gallant officers—many of them his friends and comrades—and brave soldiers that had been slain in this day's fight.

His face was strangely white and drawn as he stood amongst his staff and his officers, speaking of the day's work, and many noted that he looked years older than he had done when issuing his orders earlier in the day.

He raised his gloomy eyes towards the ramparts where

the banner of the Crescent still flaunted proudly. He raised his hand in wrathful menace.

“The infidels shall pay dear for the Christian blood they have spilt this day. The next assault shall place Galera in our power, and every soul within its walls—man, woman, or child—shall be put to the sword. None shall be spared. The houses shall be razed to the ground, and the place whereon they stood shall be sown with salt. So perish every enemy and every stronghold that lifts head or hand against the king’s majesty and the cross of Christ!”

Every head was instantly bared. Those who looked upon the stern and gloomy countenance of Don Juan did not doubt that the day would come when he would put his grim threat into execution.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF MERCY.

WHEN Eudo opened his eyes once again to the light of day, it was to find himself lying in a perfectly unfamiliar place. No dim tent protected him from the outer air, as upon his recent awakenings in camp. He was lying upon a pallet bed in a large and lofty room, where a number of other beds were ranged against the walls, and upon most of these beds lay other helpless forms; whilst a sound of groaning and sometimes of smothered curses, spoken in the Arabic tongue, assailed his ears.

For a short while he lay confused and bewildered. He gazed at the lofty white walls of the great chamber in which he lay; he saw the sunshine streaming in through a row of narrow, pointed windows. He seemed to hear from without a noise that was like the distant beating of the surf upon an iron-bound coast. It carried him back in mind to his childhood's home and the music of winds and waves, and he closed his eyes for a brief space, wondering whether he should not awake to find himself in his bed in England, and all else a strange, long, fevered dream.

"Eudo," spoke a gentle voice at his side ; and the young soldier started up, all his faculties awake now, to see the face of Esther de Aguilar bending over him, a smile of tenderness and greeting upon her lips.

"Doña Esther !" he exclaimed.

"Your cousin Esther," she answered gently, as she held to his parched lips a cooling drink, which he eagerly drained. "My poor boy, I fear you are sadly cut about and hurt. Antonio had much ado to bring you safe within these walls. He feared at first he would never accomplish the task ; but Miguel and Manuel saw, and flew to his assistance. You were in the thickest press of all, where the standard of the Cross had been for a moment set up, and where the furious struggle raged most hotly."

"I remember," spoke Eudo, as recollection and understanding returned, "I remember now. Zapata struggled up with the standard. I was close behind, and after us some others. I saw the flag float proudly for a moment ; but then they closed round upon us, and I saw no more. Where is Zapata ? is he slain ?"

"All were slain who got footing within the rampart, except you, Eudo. It was a daring feat of arms, but it cost the young standard-bearer his life, and went nigh to cost you yours. If Antonio had not been at hand, if they had not listened to his voice, and recoiled before the approach of the Brothers of Mercy, you would not have come forth alive out of that adventure ; and as it is, I fear you are sorely hurt."

"Am I ? I feel not like it," answered Eudo. "I trow

my wounds are rather many than deep. But, I pray you, tell me, where am I? And what are those sounds I hear around, like the beating of angry waves? Can it be that this is the fortress of Galera, and that I am your prisoner here?"

"You are indeed within the walls of Galera, but not a prisoner—only a guest of the Brotherhood of Mercy. These high, strong walls are a refuge and defence from all foes. None who enter here do so either as foes or as captives. It is a place of refuge for the distressed, a place of succour for the wounded. Look round you upon these beds. Friends and foes lie there side by side. The brothers bring hither all wounded who have none other to aid them. See, yonder are two Spanish caballeros, found stricken beneath the walls; and side by side are Turks and Moors, sore hurt by sword, pike, or musket-ball. A short while back we had many wounded Spaniards within these walls, carried hither by the brothers from the narrow streets and alleys of the town, where they had been struck down; but most of these, alas, died of their wounds in a brief space, so hacked and maimed were they by the weapons of their foes. That pair yonder have lived; and we have had a few others brought in this day. I fear me that more are yet lying dead and dying in the streets and before the ramparts. The brethren are few, the work is great, and the Moriscos are ever more and more deeply incensed against the Christians."

"Then are you not in peril yourselves here within these walls?" asked Eudo earnestly. "We have spoken and

thought so much of this, wondering how it was with you. My uncle, who journeyed hither from Granada, is full of anxious care for Antonio, and for you, his wife. How comes it that you are safe amid these hordes of foes? Is there not danger that they may turn upon you?"

"I scarce fear it," answered Esther, with her full, earnest smile. "There was danger for us once, just for a brief while, when El Malek and his Algerian Turks entered Galera, and strove, with all too much success, to stir up in the people that hatred which was beginning to slumber, and to incite them afresh to rebellion. In this they did succeed; and there were moments when they went nigh to setting them against us and our little following, who had found a home and asylum here. But methinks the hand of the Lord was with us; for the brief suspicion and anger at our presence died away, and the former confidence returned. The Moriscos are our friends; many of them are at heart servants of Christ, though, as is natural at such times as these, they stand shoulder to shoulder with their brethren against the power of the King of Spain, when it is used to reduce them to slavery, and to banish them from his realm, where they would gladly remain in peace. Oh, I cannot blame them. The race tie is too close and strong; but if the king did only know it, he could so easily win great numbers of these people to obedience by a little kindness and mercy."

Eudo's face was grave as he listened. He feared that there was small hope for mercy at the hands of the Spanish soldiers, should Galera ever fall into their hands. He

remembered the face of Don Juan upon the first repulse. If there were to be a second, how much less disposition to mercy would he show! But ere he had time to speak a word, the great doors at the end of the room were flung open, and Antonio, with several cowled figures acting as bearers, came staggering into the place with their load of wounded. Esther at once moved towards them, ready to place all her skill and tenderness at the disposal of the wounded wretches now brought in.

Antonio looked across towards Eudo, and seeing his eyes open and the intelligence in his face, crossed over towards him.

"How goes the day?" eagerly asked the young soldier.

"Badly for all," was the answer. "The Spaniards are beaten back once again. The recall has been sounded from the camp, yet for the moment the men are too excited to obey. But they are attempting the impossible. Galera will not be taken to-day. The breaches made by the explosion have not sufficiently shaken the citadel. Don Juan's soldiers have yet another task before them ere they can triumph."

"We are beaten once more?" spoke Eudo hoarsely. "The Cross must again yield to the Crescent?"

There was a rather strange smile upon Antonio's face.

"Sometimes I have thought there is little of the spirit of the Cross in the hearts of our Spanish soldiers, Eudo. Perhaps were there more these terrible scenes would have no place in the history of Christian nations. God alone can be the judge of that. May God grant that when the

victory of those who bear His Son's name be accomplished, they may show themselves in all truth worthy of the holy name they bear, the holy emblem they follow. May they listen to the counsel of mercy, and cease to follow the example of ferocity and hatred and cruelty set them by the followers of Mohammed."

Eudo looked into his cousin's face and was silent. He had himself experienced in the heat of battle that mad thirst for vengeance, for blood, for victory, which too often changes soldiers into wild beasts in the thick of the combat. He knew that all the fighting blood of his race flowed through Antonio's veins, together with all the instincts of chivalry and romance. But here was a power stronger than either—higher than chivalry, more compelling than national pride. Eudo looked, and knew whence such power came, and he was humbled to the dust in his own eyes.

But this was a time for action rather than for talk or thought: the wounded must be tended; there were more crippled human creatures being brought in. Eudo saw the fitting figures of cowed monks bearing in the ghastly load. With them were men, and women too, some in the flowing Moorish dress, others habited as Spaniards, but all acting in concert, as it were, moved and directed by one spirit—the spirit of mercy, of love, of brotherhood. No matter whether the wounded man before them were friend or foe, he was tended with the same skill, the same care, the same tenderness. Happy were those Spanish soldiers who were brought within these walls; for the Brothers of

Mercy reigned here, and the spirit of mercy and charity brooded upon all who passed the threshold. Strife and hatred, fury and despair might reign without, but within was peace and good will to all.

A slim, black-garbed figure seemed to separate itself from the knot of busy workers clustered about Esther, Antonio, and Father Christoval, who were superintending the arrival of this fresh batch of wounded men, and Eudo saw a girl approaching him with the light footfall and graceful motion which somehow seemed familiar, though for the moment he knew her not. But as a shy, eager smile beamed over her face, he raised himself upon his elbow and held out a welcoming hand.

"Doña Zareefa!" he cried.

"You must call me Sister Constanza now, Don Eudo," she answered, speaking in her sweet, clear tones; "for I have laid aside my Moorish name with my Moorish dress. I am a Christian maiden now, and I belong to this mission of mercy. When the war is over and we are released, I hope to make my vows in some sheltered convent home, and spend my life in prayer for my poor misguided people, who have heard the message of salvation, and have refused it."

Tears and smiles struggled together in her face. Eudo gazed and gazed, and marvelled at the change which had come upon it in so brief a space. She had merged from the child into the woman, and the sights she had witnessed, the scenes through which she had passed, had left indelible traces upon her. She was lovely still, but no longer with

the careless loveliness of childhood as he had seen her at Frigiliana a year before. Trouble had touched her—he was sure of it—and the child had become the woman.

“My mother is dead,” she said, in answer to a soft question. “My grandfather was slain before Seron, and my mother was taken with a fever upon hearing the news, and died in three days’ time. I have lived with the Brotherhood of Mercy ever since. My father is here, though he moves hither and thither seeking ever after pacification between Moriscos and Christians. Esther is mother and sister in one to me, and Don Antonio, your cousin, has been a brother. Oh yes, I am happy with them; but there is so much sorrow and strife around us! And now in this doomed city what may we not have to witness! Alas that such things should be! Ah, poor Galera! and but for the roving bands of Turks sent by El Habaqui and Aben Aboo, methinks we should have persuaded her to submission and reconciliation. *Ay de mi! ay de mi!*”

“You think Galera will not hold out?”

The girl shook her head gravely.

“Methinks it is impossible. They have beaten back the Spaniards once—yea, twice—but what have they not suffered in the doing of it? A portion of the city blown into the air: who knows how soon the rest may follow? Who knows what his fate may be from day to day? They think the castle safe, they think nothing can shake it; but who may tell? This house, full of sick and wounded, may in its turn be hurled into the air. What can they

do against so bold and experienced an assailing force? Their ammunition is well-nigh exhausted; hundreds of their boldest soldiers are slain. They can get no help from without. Oh, woe is me that their eyes were so blinded—that they made not submission in time!”

But as Eudo lay upon his pallet, sometimes flushed with fever, sometimes alert and watchful, ready to hear all that was spoken around him, he gathered that there was little of submission in the hearts and spirits of the Moriscos who lay around him, and who talked one with another in low tones through the long, wakeful hours of the succeeding night and day. They were full of confidence in the strength of their walls, in the spirit of the garrison, in the help which El Habaqui would certainly send, and which El Malek had gone forth to solicit and bring back with him. Every sound from without which reached them they declared to be the arrival of the promised aid. They would trail themselves from their beds to the loopholed windows, to look out and raise threatening hands towards the guns of Don Juan's army, that were posted upon the opposing heights, and the bombardment from which, ceaselessly maintained, was doing dire damage to the city.

Yet something of the prevailing spirit of the house seemed to touch even these fierce spirits, and Eudo and his Spanish compatriots were not insulted by the wounded Moriscos, who outnumbered them by quite two to one. Indeed, they would oftentimes talk and laugh and jest together, ask questions of them concerning their youthful commander-in-chief, and own that they felt more fear of

Don Juan than of any of the veterans they had had to meet before.

"He is the king's brother," spoke one grizzled chieftain of the Moriscos, "and he comes with power and authority from the king. The Marquess of Mondejar was brave, but he was easily moved to mercy. We knew that we had only to tender submission, and he would receive it and place us under protection, whether we were sincere or not in our protestations. We feared the 'Devil's Iron Head' when he appeared, and he did us much harm. But he was jealous of others. He would sulk in his tents and walls, and let us harry at pleasure. We had begun to mock instead of fear him at the last. But now that the king's brother is in the field, by the beard of the prophet we all of us begin to quake! If Galera fall, who knows what will happen to Seron, Purchena, Orgiba, and the rest that Aben Aboo has taken and fortified?"

Then turbaned heads would be shaken, and sighs would break forth, and Eudo could see that though the Moriscos strove after hope and confidence, yet fear was all the while in their hearts.

To and fro amongst them walked the Brotherhood of Mercy—the tall, stalwart brothers whom Eudo had known as Don Miguel and Don Manuel, and Fathers Christoval and Albotodo—seeking not only to alleviate their bodily sufferings, but to teach them something of the gospel of the Cross, knowing that their best hope for mercy in this world lay in their acceptance of the Christian faith, and believing equally that their eternal salvation likewise

depended upon this same acceptance. Eudo would lie and listen to the burning words which poured from the lips of Brother Emmanuel—as he now called himself—marvelling at the fervid eloquence and majestic power of his language. He had known him as a half-civilized, half-savage Moor with the veneer of the Spaniard upon him; he had known the history of his fierce treachery which had nearly involved his sister in disaster and death; but now he beheld him, like a prophet and seer, pleading the cause of the Cross with such vivid imagery and persuasion that his listeners were oftentimes almost confounded by it, and moved by his words more than by any pleadings or promises which others might speak to them.

Often at nights the brothers would steal into the long room, and sitting beside Eudo's bed, would talk with him long and intimately of all that had passed during the year now gone by, asking news of all their friends and comrades in Granada, telling their own strange adventures as they had journeyed hither and thither through the Alpuxarras and Almanzora with the message of the gospel, and the hope of persuading their brethren to submission and the true faith. Strange stories passed their lips of hairbreadth escapes and adventures, which caused the blood of Eudo to tingle in his veins; but as he listened he began to learn more and more of the hopeless nature of the struggle in which the Moriscos were involved, and to marvel less at the policy of the king, which seemed at times so harsh and needlessly severe.

The Moors were deeply imbued with the double-dealing

of the Oriental mind. When in fear of the Spanish arms, they would make humble submission with every appearance of good faith; but let the fear of instant punishment be withdrawn, and they were at that moment ready to take up arms again. The whole country was honeycombed with treachery. Many Moriscos would in all good faith have lived quietly beneath Spanish rule, but the bulk were bent upon trying to serve two masters—to be loyal subjects just so long as the king's soldiers were near, but to flock to the standards of revolt the moment the pressure of the iron hand was withdrawn. This was the hopelessness of the case—the thing which caused the hearts of the brethren to sink within them. There was no trusting the Morisco—no way of distinguishing between him who would keep faith and him who would not. The friend of to-day would lie in wait to slay you on the morrow. Aben Humeya himself had been done to death by his own allies. Aben Farax had been left for dead by his chosen comrade. Who could then be trusted?

“The sword must do the work,” spoke Miguel, with eyes that flashed in the darkness; “it must be the sword of the Lord and of Gideon! But may Heaven grant that when the sword of the Lord doth prevail against the infidel foe, those who wield it may remember that they are soldiers of Christ as well as soldiers of Spain, and show that the spirit of their Master is in them, and that they can show mercy in the day of triumph!”

Eudo's whole heart said Amen to that, but he trembled

sometimes when he thought of the fury which these two repulses must have wrought upon the Spanish soldiers. And as he lay listening to the boom of the guns, and sometimes felt the walls about him shake with the shock of some falling building, he would almost long for the end to come. Suspense was terrible to all.

Then came a day which Eudo never forgot to the end of his life. Images were seared upon his brain as with a hot iron. The horror and the wonder of it dwelt with him through the remainder of his days.

It was about six o'clock on a February morning. All night the guns had been silent, as usual; but on a sudden the whole air seemed set in commotion by a simultaneous roar from all sides, and this was answered by a shout, a shriek, a succession of wild yells from every wall and turret and housetop in Galera, till it seemed as though pandemonium had been loosed in one instant upon the devoted town.

Eudo sprang from his bed. By this time his wounds had partially healed, and he was able to dress himself, though with some difficulty. He had scarce struggled into his clothes before Antonio appeared, his face pale and grave. All around them the boom and roar was so terrific that they could scarce hear themselves speak.

"It has come at last," said Antonio, "the assault, the final bombardment. God alone knows what this day may see. Eudo, my friend and kinsman, I fear me I may have but saved you from one kind of death to meet another yet more terrible. They have been mining beneath the rocks; they

will explode the mines to-day : who knows that when that occurs he may not be hurled into eternity in a moment ! ”

“ And yet, knowing this, you stayed in Galera ? ”

“ Our place seemed here ; and, perchance, though the Moriscos are friendly to us, they would not have let us go forth. But we need not think of that. Are we to leave our friends, our pupils, our sheep in the hour of their direst need ? Eudo, come. I have gathered together in the strongest of our buildings all those who call themselves Christians. We must go to them and seek to fill them with hope and confidence, for no man may know what will be the issue of this day’s strife.”

Eudo followed him hastily through several long stone passages. The shrieks, yells, curses, and menaces of the Moors rose like a never-ending trumpet blast over the terrible roar of ordnance, which was filling the air with vapour and causing the very walls of the city to shake. Eudo found himself at a small window looking down one of those narrow streets which led from the upper to the lower town, and was traversed every fifty yards or so by strong barricades formed of masses of masonry heaped together, and guarded by fierce bands of Moors.

The street itself was a sight to behold. It was filled with armed men, wielding their weapons, and rushing to the barricades, or to the loopholes of the windows which overlooked the streets, where they posted themselves with their weapons. But not only were the men all alive and astir, but the street seemed full of women too ; whilst even children were there, clinging to the hands of their mothers,

but carrying bundles of arrows, or stones to strengthen the ramparts, and uttering, in their shrill, high-pitched voices, curses against the Christians, who were coming to shatter their city and kill and destroy.

It was plain that a great assault was expected. Eudo held his breath as he watched. How well he knew what was going on below amid the serried ranks of the Spaniards: how they were forming up; how they would push on and on at the word of command; how they would force their way by sheer weight of numbers through these narrow streets—veritable death-traps though they had proved before and might prove again—till they gained house after house, rampart after rampart, and stood at last victorious in the very heart of Galera itself. For Eudo seemed to know as by instinct that this time there would be no repulse. He had learned something of the weakness and the losses of the Moriscos by this; they would scarce stand a third assault, and some of them knew it, so that the fury of despair was animating their ranks and infusing itself amongst their women and children.

A dead, awful silence! It came so suddenly that for a moment not a man spoke or breathed, not a woman cried out. The guns had ceased firing by common consent, and the deathly hush seemed more terrible than the roar which had gone before.

Another sound! A faint, muffled rumble at the first, then a fearful crashing, and rending, and quaking. Eudo felt himself clinging to the bars of the window, by which he stood fascinated. The ground shook and heaved be-

neath his feet. Were they to be blown into the air and meet death thus? He was like a man who dreams. He felt no fear, only an immense curiosity. Everything seemed to rock about him. Then a wonderful sight appeared before his eyes. The very street itself, with its houses, barricades, its moving mass of humanity, was lifted bodily upwards, flung outwards and downwards towards the precipitous edge of the cliff. Houses tottered and fell with a crash; the air was darkened with dust and smoke; it vibrated with awful sounds—crashing, cracking, rending, tearing. His ears were deafened by the noise; his eyes were blinded; his brain was in a whirl. For a few minutes sight and hearing alike failed him. He believed he had been swept into that terrible vortex of destruction. He believed that death had claimed him.

Then sight and sense returned. He was still at his window, still clinging to its iron bars, still looking downwards from the lofty, commanding place where he had been stationed. And what did he see? A great swept pathway of fragments of rock and buildings, all landmarks obliterated, all houses overthrown; a wide scene of desolation and destruction, a pathway into the city laid open and undefended, whilst the air still seemed to vibrate, and the rock to quiver beneath their feet.

Then came a rush of hardy Moors along the open path, and frantic hands began to strive to erect some sort of barriers before the Spanish soldiers had time to make good their approach. And now for the first time did Eudo behold that band of Amazons of whose doings he had

heard both within and without Galera. The tall, majestic figure of Zarzamodonia appeared, and with her the band who toiled beneath her eye; and, like the men, with the same energy and almost the same strength, they set themselves to the task, not pausing to dig out dead or dying from the ruins—there was sterner work on hand then—but gathering and heaping together the masses of fallen stones, reconstructing with the fury of despair the fallen barriers, and ever and anon casting awful glances downwards to see what the enemy was doing, and whether the soldiers were coming.

Another awful crash and roar, another quaking of the very foundation of the rock. It was not quite so near to them this time; but from another portion of the town a long-drawn wail went up—a shriek that seemed to rend the very heavens.

“Another mine!” spoke Eudo, catching his breath, as he realized what had happened. “Alas! what will be the end?”

Once again he looked downwards through the street, if it could be so called, and saw how men and soldiers were rushing as to one spot. He heard a wailing cry from the women—not the Amazons, but the mothers with children clustered about them, who were too fearful of these earthquake shocks to remain longer within walls. The wailing cry shrilled up to the blue heavens above,—

“The soldiers! the soldiers! The Spaniards are coming!”

CHAPTER XXI.

DON JUAN THE CONQUEROR.

IT was a fearful scene. Eudo could but see a tithe of it. The great guns from Carthagena, which Don Juan had had brought up and put in position, played ceaselessly upon the devoted city, and in particular upon the breaches already made by the fearful explosions in the rock beneath. Huge chasms appeared in the walls and ramparts, and though intrepid women and little children toiled with the men to fill these gaps, yet they were shot down or blown to pieces as they toiled; and again and yet again would some tottering fragment of loosened rock fall headlong from some crag into the gorge beneath, often carrying with it helpless and desperate human beings.

And now the assault was commenced. Every alley to the city was blocked by masses of Spanish pikes and gleaming head-pieces. Eudo saw them pressing up that wide desolated track from whence the barricades had been swept away. He knew from the cries and shouts, the curses, the yells which resounded upon all sides, that other detachments were forcing their way into the town from other directions. He knew by that that no more ex-

plosions were to be feared. The mines had done their work, and had done it well. The castle still stood, but its outer walls were shaken; wide breaches of fallen rock showed in every rampart. The tottering houses scarcely gave shelter to the marksmen within, who strove by a steady, unceasing fire to hold back the living stream of shining warriors that was forcing its way onwards and upwards.

Terrible were the sights that were witnessed in the city that day. Shrieking women dashed out upon the Spaniards, carrying their children with them, hurling themselves downwards into the gulf beneath rather than fall captive into Christian hands, for they had learnt much of what Christian mercy too often meant. Tender maidens, who till a few weeks back had never looked unveiled into the face of a man, now flung huge stones with crushing weight upon the heads of the advancing soldiers, and when driven from their vantage ground by the infuriated Spaniards, flung themselves fearlessly upon their shining blades and died defiant. The band of Amazons stood their ground gallantly beside their barricade; they dealt death and destruction to many a mailed veteran before their ranks broke and they were driven back. Zarzamodonia herself held her place till the last, a magnificent example of dauntless courage, poised on the summit of the barricade, now completely surrounded, hurling curses upon the foe to the very last, unconquered, dauntless—a veritable fury. The soldiers themselves paused at the sight. She was alone. Her band had been slain or dispersed. This

woman alone held her ground, and flinging her arms aloft, called down upon the heads of the assailants the imprecations of her race.

There was a volley of shots. The arquebusiers were pouring up the hill to reinforce their comrades, hundreds of whom had fallen as they forced their way upwards. Zarzamodonia threw her arms above her head, stood rigid and motionless for one long second, and then fell headlong downwards.

The soldiers lifted her with some reverence; they bore her within an adjoining house; they gave her to her own people, and then pressed forward once more.

Fearful scenes were being enacted within the city. Brave as had been the resistance at first, demoralization had now set in. There was no holding the shattered walls; the breaches were too many and too great. The assailants came swarming upwards by hundreds and by thousands. The "Santiagos" echoed from every part, and the answering cries of "Allah" or "Mohammed" were fewer and fainter each minute.

In one square the Moriscos were packed like sheep, and made a last stand for their lives; but the Spanish soldiers, mad with lust for blood and vengeance, leaped upon the surrounding walls and battlements and shot them down to a man.

"Slay, and spare not!" "No quarter, no mercy!" "Do unto them as they have done!" "The general bids it; the soldier obeys."

Words such as these were like battle-cries to the enraged

soldiery. Each man there had some special grudge against the infidel; every one had known the loss of some comrade, some friend in this long, desperate struggle, and before Galera alone many a gallant Spaniard had laid down his life. The irritation and fury were the natural outcome of the stubborn resistance. Little of the true feeling of the Christian warrior had part in the hearts of these soldiers of the south.

There came a time when it was no longer battle, no longer warfare, but carnage and butchery alone. It was then that the moment long looked for by the Brotherhood of Mercy came. It was a task of no small peril they had set themselves, for soldiers mad and drunk with blood are quickly changed from friend to foe; but they did not shrink.

“Let all who fear not to face the peril come with me!”

So spoke Father Christoval, entering the hall where the brethren and sisters and their terrified flock had gathered together for safety. The father wore his white robes—the vestments in which he celebrated the Mass—and he held in his hands the Host, at sight of which every knee was bent, every head was bared. Behind him followed Father Albotodo, swinging the censer—the fumes of incense mingled strangely with the reek of powder, which was almost suffocating.

“This slaughter must be stayed, if the power of Christ can yet sway the minds of men,” spoke the father, with sorrowful sternness. “My children, pray for us; pray for your brethren in the faith, whose hearts are hardened

and their souls brutalized by this terrible strife. Pray for us, and we will go forth upon our mission of mercy; and if we come not back to you again, may the Lord bless and keep you, and may our Lady preserve you from all hurt."

They crowded around him weeping, and begging his blessing; but time pressed, and they might not linger. The two brothers, Miguel and Manuel, walked first; the fathers followed; afterwards came Antonio and two or three Spaniards who had joined the crusade; and, last of all, Eudo quietly took his place in their ranks, as though he had a right to be there.

Antonio shot a glance towards him, but said no word. He had paused just a moment upon passing out, for Esther, with Zareefa clinging to her, stood calm and erect before them.

"My wife, farewell," spoke Antonio, with a long glance into her wonderful steadfast eyes.

"Fare you well, my husband, and the God of mercy and peace be with you, and give you the victory in this time of peril."

They all knew the double danger which threatened them. At any moment the desperate Moriscos and more ferocious Turks, mad with despair and hatred, might turn their blades upon any Christian who ventured to show himself in their streets at such a moment. Little would they reckon what the mission of these men might be; they would see that they belonged to the hated race—that they bore with them the emblems of the faith of the foe. What

marvel if they turned upon them in the fury of their despair, and slew them ere their mission of mercy could be accomplished? And more than this, the brethren purposed to stand betwixt a maddened Spanish army and their helpless victims: who could say what the fierce southern soldiers might do if they believed their prey likely to escape from their clutches? Christian men had before this turned their swords upon each other over the dividing of spoil. Men boiling over with rage and the lust of blood and plunder ill brooked interference even from the ministers of the church. The sight of the Host might do much, but who could count upon the mood of the infuriated soldiery? A chance shot, a mad rush, an ill-considered blow dealt in the heat of passion, and who could tell what might follow? The little band went forth with their lives in their hands, and they knew it. But their steps did not falter, their cheeks did not blanch. Steadfastly and fearlessly they walked forth into that awful confusion of bloodshed and battle which was raging in the streets of Galera.

* * * * *

"Christ and our Lady be praised," cried Don Juan, "the day is ours—Galera is ours!"

The young commander-in-chief sat his horse immovable, absorbed in contemplation, his face set and stern, his whole soul in his eyes, as the valleys and ravines echoed and re-echoed to the awful thunder of the artillery and the yet more fearful explosions of the devastating mines.

Arrayed in a suit of burnished steel richly inlaid with gold, his head-piece adorned with many waving plumes of

brilliant hues and with a medallion of the Virgin, mounted upon a superb horse, carrying in his hand the baton of office, and surrounded by the flower of Spanish chivalry—knights and nobles who had come pressing into the ranks to serve under the banner of Don Juan—he looked the very embodiment of knightly prowess and chivalrous daring. And as his glance slowly brightened at the sight of the tottering walls, grim rents and breaches, and the crashing downwards of whole portions of the craggy citadel, those about him gave vent to their joy and triumph in shouts and huzzas, and with a long breath Don Juan himself spoke the words,—

“Christ and our Lady be praised, the day is ours! Galera is given into our hands!”

He had ridden up and down the ranks of his gallant army soon after dawn that day. He had bidden them be of a good courage; he had encouraged them to face the perils and dangers of the assault. All knew that they must hold their lives cheap, that many must fall ere the city could be taken; but not one was there in those glittering ranks but held his life cheap, so that victory for the Spanish arms might be attained.

They had other motives, too, for their eagerness to storm those deadly heights and rush upon the doomed city. All knew how great store of provision and treasure had been collected at Galera; all knew that thousands of women and children were seeking shelter there from all the surrounding region. To the Moors themselves—the men—no quarter was to be granted; but Spanish soldiers regarded

women and children as their own lawful prey. They carried them off as so much cattle to be sold in the open market, and many were made rich for life by the sale of this human plunder. Lust for blood and lust for spoil ran riot in the hearts of the soldiers, and Don Juan's exhortations had been received with ringing cheers.

Now the general and his immediate followers were watching the rush of the storming parties up the steep paths and roadways. There was the rain of stones, arrows, and bullets with which the foe still greeted them. Don Juan's face grew stern as he marked the fall of many a gallant officer, whose floating plumes distinguished him from the rank and file. He saw whole bodies of eager soldiers mown down like grass before a withering fusillade from the marksmen in some point of vantage. He ground his teeth in rage, and his eyes blazed with fury; but still the shining ranks pressed onwards and upwards, still the thunder of the guns and the rattle of musketry filled the air with clamour. But one by one the great guns upon the heights ceased to boom forth their warning notes. It was plain that the Spanish soldiers were becoming speedily so much intermixed with the Moors that the gunners could no longer fire upon the city as before. That in itself was a signal of victory; and when the last gun ceased to carry its messages of death and defiance, a gleam of triumph illumined Don Juan's features, and almost at the same moment a ringing cheer of wild delight came pealing through the plain.

“The flag! the flag! The Christian standard is planted.

It waves above Galera. Santiago! Santiago! The day is ours. Christ and our Lady be praised!"

For well-nigh nine hours had the battle raged, counting from the time of the early cannonade. Don Juan's time had now come. Putting his horse to a steady gallop, he spurred forward across the plain, and rode into Galera at the head of his brilliant cavalcade.

Awful were the sights that met his eyes as he rode. The way was strewn with dead and dying Spanish soldiers. Some called aloud for aid; some cheered the young commander as he galloped by. Some cursed and raved in the fever of their anguish; too many lay still and dead and stark, passed beyond the joy of victory or the humiliation of defeat. Don Juan's face was set and stern as he rode; anger and pity and a great rage were tearing at his heart-strings. He loved his soldiers; their sufferings touched him to the quick: the sight aroused within him feelings of intense hatred towards the rebels, whose stubborn and futile resistance had caused such loss of life amongst his own brave men. He had no compassion for the heaps of Moorish dead they quickly came upon as they neared the city, nor for the shrieks of women and children rushing wildly here and there amongst the dead, and often in their despair flinging themselves over the brink of the precipice to escape from the pursuing soldiers, who were to be seen rushing hither and thither with blood-stained blades, slaying and sparing not.

One young Morisco maiden, holding two little children by the hand, was standing over the body of her dying

father and defending it from the attacks of a couple of soldiers. She waved aloft the glittering scimitar, and in the fury of despair cut down one stalwart Spaniard before the astonished eyes of Don Juan; then she sprang fearlessly upon the gleaming blades of his companions, who ruthlessly cut down both her and the children clinging about her, till all lay dead upon the yet pulsating body of their father. But the eyes of the young commander glowed with no ray of pity; the anger in his heart was too deep and stern.

The brutal work still went on; shrieks, curses, shouts, and groans rent the air. The place was a veritable shambles. The rays of the sinking sun shone upon one vast slaughter-house.

“Slay, and spare not! It is the order of our chieftain. Down with the infidels! No quarter, no mercy!”

The streets echoed with such cries, which were redoubled as Don Juan and his following appeared; and no word passed the lips of the commander. In that hour his heart was steeled against compassion; the fierceness of his race was upon him—the fierceness which in one form or another had wrought evil to him and his, and was destined to work more. His eyes did not shrink from the sights he saw; his ears did not heed the groans of the victims. He pressed forward seeing all, approving all, till it was told him that in a certain square the soldiers had driven many thousands of prisoners, penned up like cattle at a fair, and that these were to be reserved as booty and not given over to the sword.

A sudden flash as of rage gleamed in the dark eyes of the commander. The fury of his heart blazed up.

"Let them all be slain!" he spoke in strident tones. "I have sworn a bitter vengeance upon Galera. Let no man, woman, or child be spared. I have spoken it!"

Something like dismay was in the faces of the officers about him. Not only did their spirits revolt from such an awful task of bloodshed, but they knew that the soldiers would be furious at seeing their prize escape their hands. Not from motives of mercy, but from those of greed, were these thousands of captives set aside. Indeed, it might be the greater mercy, if the greater sin, to slay them as they stood. But butchery is not warfare, and a shudder ran through the little group about Don Juan. This he saw, and again his eyes flashed, and he lifted his head with a gesture of regal pride and defiance.

"Take me to this place!" he spoke. "I will see whether I am to be obeyed or no!"

In silence they led the way; messengers ran on before with the news.

"Don Juan is coming! The commander is here! His orders have gone forth. All are to be slain. He comes to see it done."

A strange murmur ran through the crowd. The whisper had passed into the ranks of the victims themselves. An awful cry arose from their midst. The soldiers, half sullen, half shamed, stood irresolute. Their lust for blood had been well-nigh glutted. They desired these victims as booty, for nigh upon two thousand of them were women

and children. But at a word from Don Juan they were ready to fall upon them and slay without mercy.

Don Juan rode up ; his head-piece was open, and showed the stern, handsome face, the eagle eyes, the regal mien. A shout arose as the soldiers saw him, and at the same moment a wailing cry arose from the mass of humanity pent up in that narrow enclosure, who saw in him only the enemy and the avenger. The sound of the cheering and the wailing rose up in one great volume of sound ; and suddenly, as Don Juan appeared about to give the awful word of command, a new cry arose : the soldiers fell back this way and that ; an avenue seemed suddenly to spring into being, lined with mailed warriors, and down this living avenue there came a strange procession headed by a tall priest in vestments, with a ghastly wound upon his tonsured head. He bore in his hands the sacred Host, and, despite the deadly pallor of his face, walked with a firm step. Others were with him, and scarce a man amongst them but bore traces of hurt. The monk who swung the censer looked ready to drop with exhaustion, and blood was dripping from his hand and arm. Behind came some cowed figures, one of whom walked with great difficulty and pain ; and in the rear were two faces at sight of which Don Garcia, who was one of those that stood near the person of Don Juan, sprang forward with a stifled cry.

“ Eudo, Eudo ! and I had given him up for lost ! ”

All the warriors, including Don Juan, were on their feet in an instant at sight of the sacred burden borne by Father Christoval. Baring their heads, all dropped upon their

knees, and the soldiers followed the example of their leaders as far as was possible. Those too closely penned in rank to kneel bent their heads. They had many of them seen this procession before that day. Some had flouted and scorned the message it brought, others had listened and given heed for a while; some had turned upon the following of the brethren, and had dealt blows of anger in return for words of peace and appeals for mercy.

An intense silence had fallen, hushing the wails of the wretched captives and the clamour of the soldiers. In that deep hush the voice of Father Christoval could plainly be heard,—

“My son, you ask a blessing in this hour of victory; I come in the name of the God of hosts to give it to you. God has given you the victory this day. God has willed that the Cross of His Son shall triumph. Then let us glorify Him who has gotten the victory over His foes, and let us show to them in the hour of their abasement what is the mercy and long-suffering of the Holy One of God.”

Don Juan suddenly raised his head and rose to his feet, drawing himself up to his full stately height. His eyes were glowing like coals of fire in his head.

“We have shown only too much mercy in the past, my father; and what has been our reward? Now is the day of vengeance; now has come the day of reprisal. What mercy have they shown to captive Christians? What has been their method throughout this war? Let

it be done unto them even as they have done. I have spoken; my word shall be made good. Every living soul in Galera shall perish!"

"And I say not so!" spoke the dauntless monk, who was known to have been the hero of many a warlike adventure in his day, and to be no mere recluse of the cloister or sanctuary. Words from his lips therefore came with the greater power, and his voice rang like a trumpet note through the stillness of the vast waiting multitude. "I speak in the name of the Christ of mercy and love; of our Lady of Sorrows, whose tender heart, pierced through with the blow of the sword, still bleeds for sinful men, whether they be of the true faith or of alien blood. God is love. Christ is full of compassion and of tender mercy. The Spirit is a dove of peace brooding upon the waters of men's troubled, turbid souls. In the name, therefore, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I bid you sheathe your sword and the swords of your followers. This slaughter shall be stayed. Spain shall not lay this sin to her charge. In the thrice holy name I adjure you, Don Juan of Austria, forego this ruthless vengeance! See, I stand between you and your victims! You shall not touch a hair of their heads till you first slay me and trample under foot the holy thing I bear aloft!"

Slowly, and with a gesture of simple but magnificent dignity, he raised again on high the Host, and so stood facing Don Juan and his followers, his gaze turned full upon the face of the young commander-in-chief.

For a moment even now Don Juan hesitated. He had been resolved from the beginning to offer no quarter, to show no mercy, and the bitter knowledge of his own heavy losses had strengthened this savage determination within him. He was now almost ready to set at defiance the authoritative warning, even though it came from Holy Church herself, even though it was spoken in the name that is above every name. He hesitated, looked about him, and looked back at Father Christoval.

The eyes of the two resolute men met in one long fiery glance, and slowly that of the younger one fell. He saw that it was no idle threat on the part of the father. He saw that he meant what he said, and that he would die sooner than suffer this thing to be done. At the thought of such sacrilege Don Juan shuddered. He knew that not a man would move at his bidding did the priest with the Host bar his path to the victims. He knew that the soldiers desired rather to keep alive than to slay, though without this interference they would have done his behest speedily enough. But when it came to the point, the awe of the unseen, the sense of compulsion aroused by the words of the father, prevailed over the youthful heat and fury in his blood. The eyes of the commander wavered and fell. He drew forth his sword with a peculiar gesture of proud humility, and dropping upon one knee before Father Christoval, he offered it to him.

It was an act of surrender, and was recognized as such by all. A sudden ringing cheer went up from all who stood by and saw. It was an act that appealed to all the

reverence and chivalry of the Spanish soldier, the Spanish knight, the Spanish noble. In the hour of victory the triumphant general surrendered his sword to the servant of Christ and of God. There was no disgrace in such an act, rather a declaration of piety and zeal which awoke an echo in all hearts.

The father put forth one hand and took the shining weapon. He held it aloft in his left hand whilst still elevating the Host with his right. He did not speak. He could not have been heard for the thunder of applause that now went up from all throats. But the action was in itself enough. The sword of the Cross had triumphed, but the soldiers of the Cross were to wield it no more in slaughter. Henceforth it should be sheathed, and the voice of mercy should prevail.

After standing motionless thus for a few seconds, Father Christoval slowly lowered the shining weapon, and held it out once more to Don Juan.

“Take it again, my son ; and may the blessing of Christ and our Lady rest upon you, in that you have yielded your will in the hour of your triumph to the word of mercy and peace.”

Don Juan took the weapon once more. He looked at it, then at his followers, and slowly drove it home into its sheath.

“Take every man his prisoners. Let there be no more bloodshed in Galera this day. The booty is yours, and the plunder. Do with your captives as you will ; only let me not see them. And let these ramparts and houses and

walls be razed to the ground, and the site of them sown with salt, as a sign that Galera shall be a fortress no longer."

* * * * *

Don Juan sat in his tent upon the evening of the morrow, listening with rapt attention to the story told to him of the work of the Brotherhood of Mercy. Eudo and Antonio were there, and were the chief speakers; for of the others of that band of devoted men, few had escaped the awful experiences of the final assault upon Galera without suffering many hurts. The Moriscos had rained blows upon them from their ramparts, seeing in them only Christians and foes; the Spanish soldiers had flung them away, and often inflicted hurt. Yet they had toiled on amid the fearful carnage, not altogether without some reward. They had stopped inhuman slaughter in several places; they had rescued women and children from death, and worse than death, at the hands of brutalized Spanish soldiers; and at last, just when heart and hope seemed failing them, they had prevailed to prevent the final massacre, which must have left indelible disgrace upon Spanish arms and upon Don Juan's fair fame.

The young commander was himself feeling this to-day, now that the fierce heat of his fury had passed. He had heard tales of massacre that plainly showed how little need there was of the execution of further vengeance upon the conquered foe; and now he was hearing from one who had been within Galera for many long months, how that his little band of Christian workers had been protected by the

infidels, and had lived amongst them in peace and safety, even when the town was beleaguered by the Spaniards, and they knew that it was war to the knife.

Antonio had much to tell Don Juan of the state of the country, and of the need for a few strong blows such as the taking of Galera, to be followed, if possible, by measures of pacification.

And while the two talked thus of public matters, the strength of the Morisco party, the astuteness and zeal of Aben Aboo, and the difficulties that still confronted the Spanish arms, Eudo and Don Garcia sat a little apart, and spoke of things nearer to their own hearts.

"I knew not how to bear the thought of going back to tell Yolante that I had come alone," spoke the latter. "When it was told how that you and another had first scaled the rampart and planted the Christian flag, and how that none had escaped with life who had reached that rampart, my heart died within me. I could scarce believe my eyes when I saw your face with the fathers and brothers in the streets of Galera. Eudo, do you know that your knighthood is now secure? Don Juan has spoken the word. You will receive it perhaps at his hands ere the campaign progresses much further."

The lad's eyes shone. It was not perhaps quite the same as receiving it at the hands of his own queen, but he knew that she was likely enough to confirm it when he should be presented to her anew after he had reached the shores of home; and grasping Don Garcia's hand in his, he said in a glad, proud voice,—

"Methinks it will be worth all the perils and troubles we have endured to look upon England's fair shores again, and to feel that after the storm and strife we may enjoy again the blessings of peace in a land where bloodshed and confusion seem to find no place."

"And I say amen to that, soldier though I be," answered Don Garcia, whose heart leaped at the thought of what England meant to him; "for though I will do my duty to my king and country in this war, my heart is often sad within me that the cause is not a nobler one. We call ourselves soldiers of the Cross, but are our actions worthy of that name?"

Eudo spoke no word; he thought of the scenes that had been enacted in Galera yesterday. His eyes met those of Don Garcia, and both were silent.

"God is the judge. How may we know? But after what I have seen in this land, I long the more ardently for mine own."

"And I to see it with you," spoke the other, his face lighting; "and in sooth I trust that that day will not be far distant. I trow that the Moriscos will quickly learn that peace is better than war. God grant they may, for I would not willingly take part in many sieges like that of Galera."

Don Juan had risen suddenly, and all rose with him.

"I thank you, friends," he answered. "I have heard much that has given me food for thought, reason for thankfulness that the Brothers of Mercy withstood me yesterday. I was wrong, and I am not ashamed to confess it.—"

Don Antonio, I will think of your words, and write to the king of the matters you have placed before me.—Don Eudo, you have performed many gallant deeds before Galera; these I shall note also. I doubt not you will receive your reward.”

He bowed them out, and the curtain dropped behind them. Eudo looked once into Don Garcia's smiling eyes, and went to his own quarters as a man who treads on air.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE.

THE Morisco king, Muley Abdallah, or Aben Aboo as he was still commonly called by many, reclined upon a divan, lost in deep and mournful meditation. Around him the maidens of his harem were threading the mazes of the Zambra, and singing softly as they danced, seeking to remove the weight of sorrow which rested on the brow of the master they revered and loved. But though his eyes seemed to watch the graceful motions of the dancing girls, his brow remained furrowed in thought. He seemed lost in deep reverie, and the servant who softly entered and stood before him had long to wait ere the uncrowned monarch awoke to his presence and demanded his business.

This was told in a whisper, and the face of Aben Aboo seemed to cloud over as in doubt or displeasure. For a while he sat as though debating some matter within himself; then he lifted his head and gave some reply to the waiting attendant. But when the man had stolen forth, he made no sign to the girls to cease their dance, though his eyes remained fixed upon the curtain which had fallen behind the retreating servant.

Some minutes passed ere that curtain was lifted again; but when this happened it was to admit the entrance of three men, and the gaze of Aben Aboo rested upon each in turn with a piercing scrutiny, as though he would read their very souls.

He did not rise from his seat; he did not at once order the music and dancing to cease. With the air of a royal potentate he received the respectful salutations of the three men, motioned them to seat themselves, and the servants to offer them refreshment, before he dismissed the gay throng of maidens and cleared the room of listeners.

The eldest of the three visitors—a white-headed man in flowing robes, and with a beard that reached to his girdle—was no other than Ben Abner, his old friend and confidant of former days, when both were anxiously working for the settlement of differences and the peaceful solution of the problems betwixt Morisco and Spaniard. The second was a tall warrior in the dress of a Morisco chieftain, with flashing black eyes, a haughty bearing, and a frame which gave evidence of almost herculean strength and endurance. The third was a Spanish caballero, soberly and richly habited in black and silver, and wearing upon his shoulder the ensign of the blood-red Cross. It was, in fact, none other than Don Antonio de Aguilar, who accompanied this deputation as the direct envoy and messenger of Don Juan.

Aben Aboo knew all his guests well. He had chosen to receive them with haughtiness and coldness; yet when all observing eyes were withdrawn he permitted his face

to relax, and he held out his hand to his old friend Ben Abner, which the latter grasped with visible emotion.

"You have come from the camp of the Christians—my enemies," spoke Aben Aboo, breaking the heavy silence. "Have you come as friends or as foes?"

"As friends—as messengers of peace," replied Ben Abner earnestly. "Let me speak to you, my friend, as in the days of old, when we consorted together, ate each other's bread and salt, and shared the same hopes, the same aspirations—"

"Those days can never return," spoke Aben Aboo, with a stern mournfulness, "for the rent has divided race from race; a wedge has been driven in cutting clean through all those meshes of policy by which the two had been woven together. We had to choose then which camp each man should join. You chose the safety of the powerful Christian cause; I threw in my lot with mine own people. The days of old can never return again."

"That is true; yet friendship can bridge the chasm and reach the hand across it. Aben Aboo, my friend, we come as messengers of peace. It cannot be unknown to you that the cause for which you fight and struggle is well-nigh lost. In the Almanzora the Moriscos have been defeated at all points, and are eager to tender submission. You yourself best know how here in the Alpuxarras the Duke of Sesa has ravaged and destroyed your country, and how your men have been slain, your women and children sold into slavery, your cattle and crops carried off by a victorious soldiery. As you love your people and your country, Aben

Aboo, so must you long to put an end to this terrible carnage and misery, even as El Habaqui has done in the west."

As he spoke he looked towards the Morisco chieftain, whose dark eyes were half sullen, half fierce; and being thus appealed to, the man rose to his feet and made obeisance to his monarch.

"There is no choice but to submit when we are beset on every side, our strongholds taken from us one by one, our armies routed, our supplies cut off. Thou dost know well, O Aben Aboo, how that I went forth to conquer and to overcome, and that I did achieve no small success by the might of my arm and the courage of my followers. But the might of the King of Spain is greater than any which we can bring to bear against him. The Sultan sends us not the promised aid. The rovers of Barbary visit these shores rather to plunder and destroy than to aid us in this bitter struggle. I have done all that a man can do in the cause. I have taken strongholds, but how can I hold them without aid? They have been recaptured one after the other by the conquering arm of the king's brother. He has all the valour and chivalry of Spain to draw upon, whilst we—what have we wherewith to resist him?"

Aben Aboo sat with bent head, lost in bitter musings. It was all too true—too terribly true. The fall of Galera, fearfully as the Spaniards had themselves suffered there, had been as it were the turn of the tide. After that Don Juan and his victorious army had won a succession of

triumphs—not always unchecked, not always without loss, grievous suffering, and a death-roll which brought mourning and woe to hundreds of the noblest families of Spain. No bloodless victory was his; he and his army had endured well-nigh five months of continual and wearing strife. But the tide of victory was with them, and now the district of the Almanzora lay gasping and exhausted within their grasp; yet so shattered and broken were the ranks of the conquerors, that Don Juan was now almost as anxious for peace as the beaten Moriscos themselves. His foes knew not quite how severely the campaign had told upon the Christians; they only saw in them a greater readiness to receive peaceful embassies and to open negotiations. Experience of the temper of the Moors, and horror at the scenes he had lived through for so long, had tempered Don Juan's first irritation and harshness of spirit. The influence of the Brotherhood of Mercy had not been altogether without effect. He repented him often of the bloodshed at Galera. He had thanked God in humble abasement of heart that he had been saved from that last cruel massacre upon which his fierce heart had then been set. He was eager to see an end put to the war; and he also knew how exhausting and terrible to his army would be a continuance of the campaign, since it was hopeless any longer to try to bring the foe to a pitched battle. The Spanish soldiers could only hunt them through the fastnesses of their own ravines and passes, smoke them to death in caverns, or shoot them down from the heights above. And too often these proceedings were reversed:

the Moriscos would swoop down upon a band of Christian soldiers, and annihilate the whole company by sheer weight of numbers.

The summer was coming, when the land would give sustenance to the inhabitants of the wild districts, whilst the Spanish soldiers, who had swept the vegas of their crops and their flocks and herds, would only starve, unless food could be furnished them by the government. Also, the army must be thoroughly recruited ere it could commence a new campaign. Don Juan, with the instinct of a general, felt that he had now distinguished himself by a series of rapid victories, but that if he could not now bring the campaign to a successful termination, he might very soon find his laurels tarnished and faded, whilst the prestige of his victories would quickly be forgotten in the harassment and annoyance of a protracted guerilla warfare. So he was ready and willing to listen to the Brotherhood of Mercy, who were striving after a peaceful settlement; and, moreover, he so used his influence with his royal brother that the very course of policy which had cost the Marquess of Mondejar his place as captain-general of Granada was now in the main to be adopted as the basis of pacification.

The campaign in the west, under the Duke of Sesa, had been almost as disastrous to the Moriscos as that in the east under Don Juan, and yet the duke was equally anxious with his young commander-in-chief to put an end to these protracted hostilities. Both knew that it would be difficult in the extreme to hunt out and disarm all the

roving soldiers of the district, familiar to them, where every village gave them shelter and sympathy, and where they too often incited the peaceable inhabitants to take up arms. Far better would it be at this point to conclude the long war by a general pacification; and the Algerine chieftain El Habaqui, the principal leader under Aben Aboo himself, had been persuaded to cast in his lot with the peace party, and was now ready to seek to persuade the monarch to agree to the negotiations now in progress.

Aben Aboo listened with a bitter smile as his lieutenant laid before him the conditions upon which submission would be accepted. From time to time he threw in an ironical comment.

“Having failed to rob our people of their arms, His Majesty graciously promises his royal favour to all who will lay them down at his bidding!”

“And so save themselves from the horrors which lie before them if they provoke the wrath of His Majesty further,” spoke Ben Abner, with gravity and earnestness. “My friend, I know that this thing is hard; but you, who love your people, would not willingly see them crushed out of existence. The King of Spain can muster another army, larger than the one he has sent before. You have no means of recruiting yours. Your country is desolate; your subjects are weary of the hopeless struggle. The Turks, your allies, are disgusted by defeat, and have already expressed their wish to return to their own country. El Habaqui has covenanted for their removal—the first of the demands made by Don Juan.”

Aben Aboo's eyes flashed a meaning glance at El Habaqui—a glance of distrust and anger—but the chieftain met it unflinchingly.

“It is true,” he said. “Why should I see my followers slain, when there can be no hope of final victory? They came to help to plunder the Spaniards, but the Christian dogs are too many and too strong. By the beard of the prophet, I have seen enough of this warfare! I am ready and willing to make submission. I come to obtain your sanction to make it in your name. If you consent not to this, you must be content to stand alone in the tempest you will bring down upon your own head, for my followers have had enough of this warfare.”

There was a certain angry defiance about El Habaqui which bespoke his disgust with the losing cause. Aben Aboo's face was stern and sad; but before he could speak, Antonio had risen and bowed to him with an aspect of far greater deference than his own subordinate had shown.

“Mighty prince,” spoke the young Spaniard, “let me in my turn bring you a message from my master Don Juan of Austria, whose heart has been touched by the sufferings of your people, and who now desires above measure that peace shall be restored to these ravaged and harassed lands. He will not ask of you that you shall in person attend this pacification, or shall submit yourself in your own person to His Majesty of Spain. He desires no needless humiliation of a brave and resolute foe. All that he asks is your consent to this act of submission, in token of which, if you will intrust to my care your own banner,

that shall be sufficient witness for all that is asked. Give to El Habaqui your consent to treat in your name. Give to me the banner to lay at the feet of Don Juan; and for yourself, you shall not be asked to appear at the ceremony. This action upon your part shall suffice."

"And my people—shall they be disarmed and rendered helpless in the midst of their enemies?"

"They will not be in the midst of enemies when once the peace has been made," spoke Antonio, but stopped short, remembering the temper of the Spanish soldiery, and noting the look upon Aben Aboo's face.

"If they would undertake to use their weapons only in the service of the most Catholic king," spoke Antonio slowly, "it may be that their arms will be left them. I will at least lay the matter before His Excellency. Could you answer for your people were they permitted to retain their weapons?"

"They will only unsheathe them at my bidding," answered Aben Aboo, still with the same strange bitterness in his voice; "and of late I have found it a hard task to induce them to carry on the war. Only where I appear in person will they fight. When my back is turned they instantly slink back to their homes, or begin of their own accord to seek to make terms with the foe."

"I will represent this to Don Juan," spoke Antonio. "Believe me, he desires peace above all things, and his heart is grieved at the misery of this desolated country. He will seek to show as great mercy as may be. Give me that banner of yours in token of submission, and trust

me to make the best terms possible for the vanquished Moriscoa."

Aben Aboo touched a bell at his side, and gave the order to his servant. He sat rigid and motionless as the silken banner was brought in, yet he found it less hard to give it into the hands of Antonio than to place it in the keeping of his own former lieutenant.

"I know you, señor, for a very gallant knight and gentleman, and I have heard of your offices of mercy towards my people. Though you are a Christian and a Spaniard, and therefore my foe, I am not ungrateful for the many acts of mercy you have performed. I have heard of the Brotherhood of Mercy. I listened at first with scorn and with anger as it was told me what the object of the brethren was. I desired no peace; I thought scorn of mercy. I would fain have seen hatred and bitterness increased and not diminished. Thus was I doubly a foe to those who preached peace and good will. But I have heard what such men as you have accomplished. I know how the slaughter at Galera and other places was stayed. Into your hands, therefore, I deliver up this banner, in token of submission, and I thank you that you receive it in lieu of my personal presence; for that I must have refused, though it brought me to death."

A long and earnest conference then took place betwixt the four men, in which all the conditions of surrender and pacification were fully discussed and considered. Antonio acted as the especial envoy of Don Juan, and from time to time went forth to consult with His Excellency's secretary,

Don Juan de Soto, who had accompanied them, and was ready to discuss any difficult point, or to put into writing any fresh proposition. The conference lasted far into the night, and at break of the clear May morning the commissioners rode away, leaving Aben Aboo wrapped in deep and gloomy meditation, divided in mind betwixt a sombre relief at the prospect of peace, and an intense humiliation and disgust at the step forced upon him by the exigencies of the situation.

But as he mused the light slowly dawned in his eyes, and presently he smote his hands together.

"All is not yet lost. I know my people better than they know themselves. Let this pacification take place. For the moment they are weary of war. They will scarce rally round even my standard. They are longing for rest and a breathing-space. Let them have it; let them see to what this submission will lead. I know the next step. Don Antonio himself could not deny that it was probable. The king's mandate will go forth. The Morisco population must needs be broken up. Homes and families must be desolated, that he may fill the land with loyal Christians. We shall be driven forth hither and thither, to be scattered broadcast throughout an alien nation, who will hate and revile us. That is their policy; that is their plan. Good! Let us see what my people will say when they hear what peace will bring them. Let El Habaqui and his Turks sail away to Barbary. Let all who are willing to serve the Cross league themselves with the conquerors. There will still be enough men of mettle left to

raise the standard of revolt at the bidding of Aben Aboo. And I will be revenged too. That traitor shall not escape. I will have his blood. El Habaqui shall die. He has sold himself to the foe. He has proved a traitor to the cause of the prophet. He shall die the death, and the banner of the Crescent shall again be unfurled in the Alpuxarras. I, Aben Aboo, have said it."

* * * * *

The glorious sunshine of a brilliant afternoon late in May was shining upon the camp of Don Juan near to Fondon de Andarax, where preparations for some species of pageant might plainly be seen in the hurrying to and fro of soldiers and servants, in the array of brilliant-hued banners, in the equipment of the men-at-arms, and the arrangement of the open space around the tent where Don Juan and his staff had gathered.

Not without trouble and friction had the negotiations been concluded. There had been perilous moments when it had seemed as though, in spite of the evident desire after peace shown by both parties, it would be impossible to adjust matters upon a basis of settlement. An insolent letter from an inferior officer, who had taken offence at some request of El Habaqui's, had gone near to setting the whole Moorish camp in a blaze once more. The Spanish plenipotentiaries going to and fro betwixt the rival hosts had been in danger more than once of death at the hands of the irritated Turks and Moors. Matters had not progressed with the speed and smoothness that had been hoped for at the outset; nevertheless, by an exercise

of courtesy and forbearance which did credit to Don Juan's professions as a chivalrous and Christian knight, all difficulties had at last been smoothed away, and the act of submission and humiliation was about to be made.

Even now the satisfaction of the Spaniards could not but be a little damped by the almost universal refusal of the rebel leaders to join in the solemn ceremony. Aben Abco's way had been made clear for him. Don Juan had from the first resolved not to put too much pressure upon the proud old monarch, who had shown himself a foe of no small prowess, skill, and courage. His desire was rather to conciliate than to irritate him; and his followers had been allowed to retain their arms, on the understanding that they were to use them only in the service of the King of Spain. But it had been supposed that the rebel chieftains would come in some considerable force to witness and take part in this act of submission and reconciliation; yet when the time came it was found that only El Grandino was willing to accompany El Habaqui to the Christian camp, and that El Malek, El Hoseyn, El Xoaybi, with many other notable warriors, had betaken themselves elsewhere, and were not to be found. There had been no exact condition made of their attendance—it had been taken rather as a matter of course; and there was something perhaps a little ominous in their absence, since, if they truly desired peace, why not welcome it by their approbation of the first necessary step?

Don Juan had taken up his position with his staff outside his tent. A chair had been placed for him upon

a low dais, where he seated himself with an almost regal mien. Indeed, the dignity he had often displayed recently during the trying negotiations had won great admiration from the veterans of the army who had served under his father, and often had the shout been raised in the camp,—

“This is indeed the true son of Charles the Fifth!”

All the camp was now astir. Regiments were drawn up in position; a long avenue of mail-clad warriors made a wide pathway from the tent of Don Juan far into the plain it fronted. At a greater distance, bodies of well-equipped Castilian soldiers, the flower of the army, were waiting to act escort to the advancing Moriscos, and the bands were discoursing gay martial music to while away the time, whilst the whole scene was enlivened by the fluttering of banners, the waving of pennants, and at last by a burst of artillery salvos, as news was brought of the approach of the Morisco chieftains.

“They come! they come! they come!”

The soldiers drew up in a compact mass. They stood rigid and motionless, like a wall of burnished steel. The guns thundered out their welcome; the music crashed with joyous brazen blare; and at the far end of the living avenue could now be seen the approaching procession, escorted by the companies of Castilian foot-soldiers, who, however, fell back into rank as they reached the appointed spot, leaving the Moriscos to march forward alone.

Not quite alone were they, however; for Don Antonio walked with them, together with Don Juan de Soto, bearing on a lance the banner of Aben Aboo. They headed

the procession, and were followed by the two Morisco leaders El Habaqui and El Grandino, who rode side by side, gorgeously habited with Oriental splendour, and betraying no shame or humiliation in their impassive faces, whatever may have been the feelings in their hearts.

Behind them marched three hundred Morisco troops, also bravely caparisoned and attired. Nothing could be heard for the noise of the guns and the instruments; but when the procession approached the dais whereon sat Don Juan, this clamour suddenly ceased, and so great was the contrast that a deep hush fell upon all the assembled host, and it seemed as though one could have heard the fall of a pin.

El Habaqui and his companion instantly sprang from their horses, and the former, as spokesman, prostrated himself with Oriental humility at the feet of Don Juan.

“We come,” he said, in a clear voice which was heard far down the ranks of Spanish soldiers—“we come, Your Excellency, to entreat your mercy in the name of His Majesty, that he will pardon our offences, which we acknowledge to be many and great, and in particular that of rebellion against his sovereign power in this land.” Then unloosing from its scabbard the shining scimitar which he carried, he presented it to Don Juan with the greatest show of humility and submission.

At the same moment the two Spanish caballeros, who bore the banner of Aben Aboo, flung it at the feet of the general, saying,—

“By this token the king, Muley Abdallah or Aben

Aboo, makes his submission to Your Excellency as His Majesty's representative, and hopes to receive pardon for all his misdeeds."

Don Juan had risen to his feet at the approach of the cavalcade, and now he stepped forward and raised El Habaqui with that grave courtesy and dignity of bearing which was the distinguishing mark of the Spaniard of those days. When the two men stood face to face, Don Juan with a bow returned the scimitar, saying,—

"Keep it, O gallant chieftain, and use it ever hereafter in the service of His Majesty, whose gracious pardon this act of timely submission shall surely win. Serve him faithfully with your strong arm and brave heart, and assuredly you shall not lose your reward."

At the close of this speech cheers broke forth from the Spanish soldiers, and, after a brief hesitation, the Moriscos joined in the clamour. When the ceremony was over, the Christian soldiers mingled freely with them, marching them off to a banquet which had been prepared by the orders of Don Juan, and seeking in feasting and merry-making to make them forget the humiliation of the scene they had just witnessed.

El Habaqui was also feasted by the Bishop of Guadix, who was in the camp, and Don Juan dined at the same table. Afterwards they discussed in greater detail the terms of the treaty which was now an accomplished fact, and on the day following El Habaqui and his men were suffered to return whence they had come, the leader having promised to go once again to Aben Aboo, to assure him of

what had taken place, and then to return again with his seal and signet to the treaty.

Meantime the camp was given over to feasting and revelry. The long, weary war was ended—so at least it seemed—and there was no room in the hearts of the soldiers for aught but joy and gladness.

Three days later, at the feast of Corpus Christi, another solemn ceremony took place, as the Church desired to make it a day of thanksgiving for the close of the war.

A gorgeous tent had been erected where a high altar had been reared, and the soldiers had shown their devotion by planting a long avenue of trees, taken up in full leaf, and leading away from the tent to the camp. When Mass had been celebrated in the tent, in presence of Don Juan and as many of his immediate followers of knights and gentlemen as could obtain admittance, the Host was carried forth by the bishop in splendid vestments; and a procession of gallant caballeros followed, whilst a number of knights, all carrying lighted tapers in their hands, led the way.

Volley of musketry, salvos of artillery, and the sound of martial music made strange accompaniment to the procession; but it was in keeping with the spirit of the age and of the day.

The bishop was followed immediately by all the priests, monks, and friars who were in the camp; and in the pauses of the martial music they would raise their voices in a song or chant of praise, which was taken up by the kneeling ranks of soldiers, and sung with strange solemnity and joyfulness. The pall over the Host was borne by Don

Juan himself and three other notable men ; and the bishop passed between the ranks of the kneeling soldiers, elevating the sacred symbols, whilst his immediate attendant sprinkled with holy water the prostrate warriors.

Last of all, Father Christoval addressed the assembled multitude in his deep, trumpet-like tones, and preached a stirring sermon, which was listened to with breathless interest.

He preached a mingled gospel of mercy and loyalty. The king had shown great clemency to the conquered foe, and his soldiers must likewise show themselves merciful ; but since war was their profession, and other fields would claim them soon, they must not let the sword rust in the scabbard. To fight was their duty, their privilege—from that they must not shrink ; but they must needs remember, too, that they were men as well as soldiers, and in the hour of victory they must attune their minds to thoughts of mercy, and show themselves Christian knights as well as mere soldiers.

The men listened with breathless interest and attention, for they knew Father Christoval well, and honoured and admired him.

“ Will they remember those precepts ? ” asked Eudo softly of Don Garcia, beside whom he stood ; and the latter turned a gravely smiling face upon him as he answered,—

“ Let us hope that the memory of Galera will keep them in mind of such precepts. From the bottom of my heart I thank the Lord and our blessed Lady that the

day has come when an end will be seen to these horrors, and Moor and Christian will again dwell together in these fair lands in peace."

* * * * *

Late upon that day Don Juan sent for Eudo and for Don Garcia, and asked them of the future.

"You are now a knight of His Majesty of Spain," he said, addressing the young Englishman, "and methinks you have come to love the service to which you have pledged yourself these many months, and have done good service therein. Tell me: I know that my friend Don Garcia does contemplate a retirement from service for the nonce, and that he sails away to England to wed his bride there." A smile hovered over the face of the young general. He himself was pledged to the life of the camp. His ambition was all for glory and renown, for stirring adventure, the clash of arms, the din of battle. Other softer joys had no attraction for him. He asked nothing for himself save the life of a soldier. He could scarce believe that a man who had tasted the joys of victory could desire anything else than to persevere in the pursuit of honour and glory. His eyes dwelt upon Eudo with meaning gaze. "That being so, his post about my person will be vacant. Don Eudo de Montara, I offer that post to you. Will you follow my fortunes wherever they may lead me? First we will quell to the uttermost this revolt which is now well-nigh subdued. Later I hope and believe that His Majesty may be prevailed on to give me a command against

those rebellious Provinces which are denying their allegiance both to him and to Holy Church."

A slight flush rose in Eudo's face. He had followed the banner of Don Juan willingly against the cruel Morisco foe, but to take up arms against men who were fighting for liberty and for the faith which he went nigh to holding himself—that were impossible.

"Sire," he answered with quiet boldness, "I thank you with all my heart for your great condescension and goodness. I desire no better and nobler a leader than Don Juan of Austria. But my duty to my country, to my father, to my sister calls me hence now. I must needs take her back to our native land. The day may come when I shall take up arms once again; but, to speak the truth from my heart, as a true knight always should, I think not that I could ever bear arms against our kinsmen of the Provinces. That campaign I could not share."

Don Juan looked full at him for a moment with something betwixt a smile and a frown. Then his eyes lighted, and he held out his hand.

"Farewell then, Don Eudo. You are a brave man, but the sooner, methinks, that you quit the shores of Spain the safer for yourself. You have nought to fear from me, but beware of your bold tongue."

Eudo kissed the extended hand and went out. He turned at the door, and met the earnest gaze of a pair of dark, melancholy eyes. Then he dropped the curtain behind him. He had looked his last on Don Juan.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FAIR GRANADA AGAIN.

IN Granada there was joy and gladness. The streets were gay with fluttering banners, and the windows were wreathed with garlands. Joy-bells made a thrilling clamour in the hot summer air, and the sun shone with power and splendour upon the beautiful city with its white and red towers, its hanging terraces and gardens, its wonderful battlements and buildings, and dazzling cupolas and minarets.

Rejoicing was in the very air of the place. Nobles and citizens greeted each other with the effusion of a common joy. Despite the fact that mourning was worn by many families in Granada, as it was throughout all the land of Spain at that time, there appeared happiness and relief in all faces. For was not the long and bloody war over at last? Had not the treaty of peace been already signed? Don Juan had gone forth with his army, and would shortly return triumphant. The bloodshed and confusion of these past years would quickly be forgotten. Wives would welcome back their husbands, mothers their sons, maidens their lovers. Oh, it was no wonder the joy-

bells clashed, and the houses decked themselves with rich stuffs and brilliant blossoms. All nature seemed to share in the general jubilation; all hearts beat fast with joy and triumph.

True, there were clouds hanging in the horizon of the sky. Away to the west of the Alpuxarras, at Ronda and Marbella, the standard of revolt still flaunted defiantly; but had not El Habaqui undertaken the pacification of those disturbed districts as soon as he should have accomplished the embarkation of the Turkish troops from the shores of Spain? There was no fear or misgiving in the hearts of Granada's citizens that day—nothing but joy and gladness and triumph in the final discomfiture of a foe who had proved himself at once skilful and cruel, crafty and vigilant, terrible in vengeance and treacherous in friendship.

The hatred betwixt nation and nation, Christian and Moor, had blazed up now to terrible proportions. Small hope was there of the two peoples living peacefully side by side again. The government was still seeking to negotiate for such a condition as a basis of settlement, but the far-sighted and keen-eyed politicians of the day felt the futility of any such course. What had been possible a century ago had become impossible now; the bigotry and infatuation of Philip the Second had done its work only too well. The seed had been sown; the harvest must be reaped—a bitter harvest for the conquered race, yet one which they had helped to lay up for themselves.

But doubts as to ultimate results did not mar the joy

of the present moment. In the Casa de Aguilar there was an intensity of happiness and relief. Don Rodrigo himself had gone forth to Fondon de Andarax, and had brought word of what was going on there. At any time Antonio might be coming home to join his wife, and Don Garcia had been promised by Don Juan leave of absence as soon as the treaty of peace had been signed—leave which would give him time to travel with his betrothed to England, and spend many happy months there ere he thought of returning. Indeed, in his own heart he had sometimes debated the question of his return to his native land. There were moments, as has been said, when the thought of a life in free England seemed more attractive to him than a return to his own well-beloved land.

Eudo, too, might be expected back at any time—Eudo, who had been especially marked out for distinction, had been made a knight of Santiago, and had received such a substantial reward for his services in gold and jewels and rich stuff from conquered cities, that he had written to his sister to tell her he should be a rich man all his days. He had not sought plunder; it had come to him unasked. Don Juan had regarded him with especial interest and good will, and was resolved that the young English soldier should not return to his own land empty-handed, after having risked his life again and yet again in the service of the King of Spain.

Yolante and Inez were wandering up and down one of the many beautiful terraces overhanging the valley of the Xenil, talking of the return of the warriors. No word

of love had ever passed betwixt Eudo and Inez, and yet Yolante felt sure that her brother's heart had long since been given to the youthful heroine of Istan, whose prowess during the first outbreak of hostilities was still told in many homes throughout Spain.

Inez had become, as it were, a daughter of the house ere this, and Juanita's marriage at Easter to a gallant noble of Granada, a relative of the Marquess of Mondejar, had made her position the more secure. Doña Magdalena looked to her for a thousand little services; the children clung to her as to a sister, and she had responded by a warm and tender love to all of that race. At first the sense of her own humble rank as a citizen maiden had caused her to shrink with some timidity from any appearance of equality with those of the noble house of which she was a member. But during the days of storm and stress, of terrible anxiety and suspense, of threatened peril even to the citizens and residents of Granada itself, such barriers had been quickly broken down. The girl had grown into her place as one of the family, and now Yolante felt towards her almost as a sister. She had taught her her own native tongue; and as Inez had been educated by her uncle in his leisure hours, and was already versed in Latin and Italian and in many branches of learning little heeded by the majority of maidens of that day, she proved an apt and ready pupil. The children themselves would come and listen and chatter English with their cousin, and Doña Magdalena had begun to do the same, so that the Casa de Aguilar already seemed almost as much English as Spanish;

and often when Yolante spoke of the days, now drawing near, when she would be going back to her native land, Doña Magdalena would look at her with a wistful smile and say,—

“I could almost wish that I were going too. Beautiful, free England! How often my heart yearns to see it anew!”

Ruy and Pepita made no secret of their intentions.

“When Cousin Yolante goes back, we go with her, and Inez too. We want to see England, and we have relations there. Yolante came over the sea to see us. We will go back over the sea and visit our uncles there. We want to see what a ship is like; we want to see what England is like. We are going with her, Pepita and I.”

Ruy was given to speak for both, but Pepita's bright eyes gave eloquent response. Don Rodrigo would laugh as he looked at the eager faces of the children, and then his eyes would travel to his wife's face, and he would ask gently,—

“Dost thou desire the same thing, dear heart?”

Yolante had her own suspicions that something was moving in the mind of her kinsman, and to-day, as she and Inez stood looking over the glorious panorama stretched out before their eyes, wrapped in the glowing splendour of the quivering sun's rays, she suddenly exclaimed,—

“If we have nothing quite like this in England, methinks you will yet not be disappointed, Inez mia. This wonderful haze heat brooding over the wide plain makes me long for the lapping waves of our beautiful bay, for the great

crag and rocks where the white surf lashes itself to fury, and the sea-birds wheel and cry, and the moon at night makes a great silver pathway, leading as it were to the pearly gates of heaven. And then behind us the great moorlands roll backwards in swelling waves of green; but around our houses the trees grow thick, and our gardens are a sight to behold all the spring and summer months. There is not the glamour, the glory, the luxurious splendour of the south, but there is a soft and tender beauty which to me is almost sweeter. I love this beautiful Granada of yours. If it has to be my home, I shall love it more and more. But England will ever be the country of my thoughts and my tenderest love. I shall rejoice to show it, Inez, to you."

The girl cast down her eyes for a moment, and then raised them with a peculiarly brilliant and flashing smile. It was a look Yolante remembered from their early acquaintance.

"You talk as though I were going back with you, sweet Yolante," she said, "yet none has ever said so."

"My heart tells me that Eudo will not go without you, Inez," spoke Yolante softly; and a quick flush dyed the dark cheek of the Spanish maiden.

"I know not how that may be," she answered, very low. "Moreover, have I not my duties to those I serve here? They gave me a home in the hour of my need. How can I leave them except by their consent and with their approbation?"

"I trow that neither will be withholden from you,"

answered Yolante. "I sometimes think that when the time comes for Eudo and for me to sail back to our beloved home once more, we shall not go alone. Have you not heard? Have you not seen? I have had my thoughts, my suspicions for long."

"That would be beautiful!" cried Inez, with glowing eyes. "Ah me, Yolante, does it not all seem like a strange, terrible, beautiful dream? It was all so terrible, so horrible at first! But now there seems nothing left but gladness and joy—if only my heart did not bleed so oft for the poor loyal, peaceable Moriscos, who are to be turned from their homes and drafted into other cities. It is so hard to be banished, even for one's own safety and well-being, as the government declares these steps to be. But for all else I have nothing but happiness and joy. So many dear ones in peril, and none lost to the house of Aguilar!"

At that moment little Ruy appeared, running headlong down the flight of steps leading to this terrace, his face flushed with excitement.

"Yolante, Yolante, somebody has come! And you are to go. Mother bid me tell you to run quickly. They are on the patio. It is somebody who wants you. Hurry! hurry!"

Somebody who wanted her! Don Garcia's name leaped to the girl's heart and lips, though she did not give it utterance. She did not linger to ask of Ruy any question whatever, but, with foot as fleet as that of mountain roe, she raced along the terrace, skipped up the marble steps, and passed through the arched doorway of the arcade into

the coolness of the shady patio, where Doña Magdalena lay during the greater part of the day upon her couch, generally with Esther at her side to read or talk to her—Esther being truly a daughter of the house since she had been brought from the terrible scenes at Galera to the shelter of the Casa de Aguilar by Don Rodrigo himself.

In the open doorway Yolante paused a moment to gaze at the group surrounding the lady's couch. The dazzle of the sun was in her eyes, and she was expecting to see the tall and knightly figure of her lover, who was always associated in her mind with a vision of white and silver, his favourite style of dress. But in a moment her vision cleared. She saw plainly, and a cry of astonishment and rapture sprang to her lips,—

“Father! father! father!”

They all turned, and a tall man with grizzled head, fine features, and a dignified presence took a forward step, and held out his arms, into which Yolante rushed with a little inarticulate cry of wonder and delight.

“My child! my child! my dearest daughter!”

“Father, sweet father! Oh, how good it is to see your face! O father, when did you come?”

“I have not been above a few minutes within these walls, daughter. I reached Malaga three days since, to find all the land rejoicing over this happy conclusion of hostilities. I have ridden hither with what speed I could. Let me look at your face again, my child. Ah, it is good to see those bright eyes once more. I have missed my little song-bird, my saucy wench, my mischievous mad-

cap. Since she would not come back to her old father, he must needs come in search of her. But methinks the air of Spain has not disagreed with you, sweetheart. You look as blooming as any English maiden on the wilds of the moors at home."

"And you should see Eudo, father! Scarce will you know him again, I trow. And think of it: he is a knight now. He was sent to Cordoba with dispatches by Don Juan, and the king bestowed that honour upon him. He is a knight of Santiago—Saint James, as we do call it—and he wears the order proudly about his neck. He has done such things! He will not tell you the half, but Don Garcia tells us all. Ay, father, you have come indeed at a happy moment, for any day may now bring back the warriors from the war. Some will still have to keep the field, but Eudo and Don Garcia are to be sent hither right soon. They have borne the brunt of the war, and they are to be free from service now—Eudo to return home, and Don Garcia to accompany him."

The girl hid her glowing face upon her father's shoulder. Lord Montara gently caressed her hair as he said softly,—

"So I am to lose my little song-bird after all, am I? Is this what comes of sending our daughters into the midst of the gallants of the Spanish court? Could you not find a knight at home to take your fancy, little one?"

Still her face was hidden, and her father stood gently caressing the soft, wavy hair. It was Doña Magdalena who spoke next, with a gentle appeal in her sweet tones.

She spoke English too, with the softness of a daughter of the south.

“Methinks when you do see Don Garcia de Manriques, Lord Montara, that you will understand wherefore the maiden has given her heart to him. A more chivalrous and gallant knight and gentleman it would be hard to find. Moreover, I think that it is because he looks more Englishman than Spaniard that her heart was so soon drawn towards him. He has the blood of the northern races in him, and his heart inclines him to northern latitudes, where he has travelled much. I misdoubt me but that it will be we, and not you, who will lose Yolante upon her marriage. I trow that she has but to say the word and Don Garcia will make England his home for ever.”

Lord Montara's face beamed brightly. It was plain that he heard these words with a very keen sense of satisfaction. Yet it was not at once that he spoke his mind openly on this or on other matters; that was only done when the shades of night had fallen, when the children were in bed, the lamps lighted, the servants withdrawn for the night, and the family party left in one of the beautiful rooms opening upon the patio, safe from any intrusion or from prying eyes or listening ears.

Then Lord Montara spoke more fully as to the purport of his visit, and as to his own desires for the future of his children and his kinsfolk of the house of Aguilar.

“Don Rodrigo, it has always been my wish to pay in person a visit to the head of the house to which my dear wife belongs; and, as you do know, I have oftentimes

expressed a hope that some day you would visit her and myself in our English home. But I have at this present time a special wish to see you and your children within the walls of my house. And since my heart was hungry for a sight of my child—my children—this seemed a fitting moment to come in person, pay my respects to my kinsman, and lay my request before him.”

Yolante pressed her hands closely together, a look of eager excitement in her eyes. Her gaze travelled from her father's face to that of her uncle ; she held her breath to hear the reply of the latter.

“ I am grateful to you, Lord Montara, for your good will and courtesy, nor do I deny that the thought of a visit to England has many attractions for me. I have been debating in my mind some such step—debating it very earnestly—”

He paused, hesitated, and spoke no further word ; but Lord Montara took up the thread of the conversation, lowering his voice with an instinct of caution, whilst his listeners pressed closer to him, holding their breath, as if divining what he was about to say.

“ I can well believe that, knowing the dark cloud which hangs over this fair land. Nay, I speak not of the Morisco rebellion, which is, I trust, now at an end ; I speak of that yet darker and more cruel peril which, when peace has been restored, will but close more rigorously upon all regions of Spain. You know to what I allude—that awful Inquisition. We have heard what it doth do in the lands where it has been planted. Our coasts are filled with

refugees from those provinces which the King of Spain is crushing to death under the heel of religious tyranny. Him they would serve—or would have done at the commencement of the struggle—but the Inquisition they cannot and will not bear. And it is whispered that when once the Moors are swept from this land, the dread alguazils of the Holy Office will turn their attention to the spread of heresy in Spain itself, and that no house, no family, no reader or thinker will know himself safe from that suspicion which alone is sufficient to cast him into one of those awful prisons, there to encounter unknown and unspeakable horrors.”

There was deep silence for a few moments. Doña Magdalena clasped her husband's hand between both of hers; Esther's grave eyes were alight with emotion; Yolante shuddered and crept closer to her father, who threw his strong and sheltering arm about her.

“Had I known then all that I know now about the methods of the tribunal, I doubt me if ever I could have sent my son and daughter hither. But the Lord has preserved them thus far. The king has had his mind full of other matters, and the Inquisitors themselves have been busy with infidel captives. Yet the day is coming when they will turn their cruel eyes upon Christian subjects of the king—those who have dared to read the Scriptures in their own tongue, or to seek to think for themselves, and ask whether everything taught by the priests as the doctrine of the Church can be true. Who then may be safe? Can I willingly resign my beloved child to such a possible

fate? Can I do otherwise than wish that all who are kin of mine through my dear wife should escape for a while to the freer air of England, and watch whether those things I foresee and fear for Spain do not take place?—Don Rodrigo, think you well of this. You know the temper of your king, the temper of Espinosa, the Grand Inquisitor. You know whether your son, who has married a wife with Jewish blood in her veins, or your own wife, who has English relatives, or yourself, Don Rodrigo, a man of liberal and enlightened views, as I have learned in conversation with you, will be likely to escape the Argus eyes of men who hate so-called heresy as they never yet hated pagan and Moslem infidelity! And where suspicion alone suffices—where the malicious information of a single miscreant counts as damning evidence—who may hope to escape? I fear me that a time is coming when Spain shall herself lie as crushed and helpless beneath a terrible spiritual tyranny as the hapless Moriscos do now beneath the heel of a conquering army.”

Instinctively Don Rodrigo gave a quick look around him, as though to make sure there were none to hear; but these words of Lord Montara's were simply the echo of many dim misgivings which had assailed him of late. He knew well that, whilst loving king and the orthodox Church as established in the land, he hated with all his heart and soul the workings of the Holy Office. He had the wide outlook of the statesman, and had learned something of the benefits of religious toleration from his English relatives. He longed to see more liberty here in his native

land, but he was well aware that, in all human probability, a time of bitter trial and persecution lay before her. Already in Seville and other places the fires of the *auto da fé* had been lighted, and doubtless here in Granada similar sights would soon be witnessed. Don Rodrigo clasped the hand of his wife more closely in his own. What if some dark night the awful familiars should enter his house and drag away from his side the partner of his joys and sorrows? What could he do if such a thing were to happen? Nothing, absolutely nothing. No hope of mediation from king or nobles, no hope of bribing jailers or obtaining means of escape. He shuddered at the bare thought of such a possibility, and he knew that it was one which might become a reality in the days that were coming.

"Methinks I will accept your invitation, Lord Montara," he said, speaking suddenly and with decision. "I trow that what you have spoken is true. We live in days which may become perilous indeed. I have thought of this thing myself in the long watches of many sleepless nights of anxiety. I had well-nigh arrived at this conclusion myself. Your words have but put the final touch to the edifice. The desires of my wife and children shall be gratified. We will to England, that land of freedom, and later we can decide whether we make there our home or return hither to fair Granada."

"Brighter days may come for Spain under another king," spoke Lord Montara, with a look of distinct relief on his face. "I would speak no evil of the monarch you

serve, but I know that many hope to see better days than are like to be under his sway. These may come full soon; let us hope and pray for that. Meantime our gracious queen has welcome for all who seek the shores of her realm; and there are fair manors to be had in England, where men may live at ease and enjoy peaceful and prosperous lives, where the sound of war comes not, and all is prosperous and smiling."

Great was the joy in the hearts of the children at hearing on the morrow of what was purposed—that soon they were to sail away in the white-sailed sloop which had brought their uncle, sail away with Yolante and Eudo, with Antonio and Esther, to the shores of the England which had been their dream for so long. From that moment forward they would speak no other tongue save to the attendants who could not understand them, and a dozen times a day they would rush up to their uncle and cry,—

"We are English now—we are an English boy and girl. Will our cousins in England know when they hear us talk that we have ever lived in Spain? Yolante talked strangely when she came first, but now she talks like us. Do we talk like her? Will anybody know? We want to be all English, and to serve Queen Elizabeth. Shall we ever go to court and see her for ourselves?"

Inez was rather pensive for the first day of Lord Montara's visit; but upon the evening after his arrival, as she was standing on one of the moonlit terraces, gazing with grave, earnest eyes out over the beautiful misty world of

the Vega below, wrapped in a silver haze, she heard a step approaching, and before she could decide whether to stay or to fly, Lord Montara himself was beside her.

"Doña Inez," he said, in his grave, gentle tones, "I have desired to have speech with you; for Yolante has told me your history, and has whispered to me a secret which methinks will not long be a secret when my son comes home—"

But Inez drew suddenly back with an exclamation of pain.

"O my lord, speak not so," she implored; "I am not worthy—I am not worthy. Yolante has been like a sister to me; she has taken me to her heart. And Don Eudo—oh, I dare not speak of him! But I know that I am no fit wife for a son of your house—I know it as well as you can tell me, my lord; and I will sooner break my heart than do him wrong, or bring pain and sorrow to those who love him best."

Lord Montara laid his hand gently upon her shoulder as he said,—

"You mean that you are ready to give him up? You love him well enough to make this sacrifice sooner than do aught to harm his prospects in life?"

"I do, I do!" she answered, the tears sparkling in her eyes as she turned them up to him. "Only say the word, and I will go away from hence where he will never find me. I would have loved to look once more upon his face, but I will not ask even that if you say me nay. I desire his good above all else; for myself, I am nothing!"

“Only the woman of Eudo’s choice—only the maiden to whom his heart is given; only one of the heroines of this war, of which he is called one of the heroes.” As he spoke, Lord Montara took the hands of Inez and raised them to his lips, and then drawing her towards him more closely, he touched her brow as a father might. “Listen to me, Inez Arroyo. I hold in my hand a letter addressed to me by my son, which reached me just the day ere I started forth upon my journey. In it he tells me your history, and asks my blessing upon his love for you. Eudo is not my eldest son or heir. He has, as you know, an elder brother, and I have younger sons growing up round me. He has won his spurs, he has won renown and wealth; it would be hard if he might not win the maiden of his choice. Inez, love him, and be to him a faithful wife, and you shall find in me a father; moreover, you shall wed him here amid your own people, and travel with us to fair England. For his sake you will make his country yours, and be one of us over yonder across the sea?”

She was sobbing now for very joy, and he drew her gently towards him. Yolante came running towards them with eager feet.

“O father, dear father, then all is well! We only want Eudo and my Garcia now, and our happiness will be complete.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

WELCOME AND FAREWELL.

“**F**ATHER, father! come quickly! Hasten, I pray you, and come. Hark to the guns and to the bells! They are sounding the note of welcome! They are coming—they are nigh at hand! O come and let us watch them as they approach!”

Yolante burst in upon her father and her uncle with these excited words upon her lips. Her eyes were shining; her breath came thick and fast. Early that morning a messenger had arrived to tell that a body of horsemen from Don Juan's army, led by Don Garcia, was approaching Granada, and ever since the city had been in a ferment of wild excitement.

It was no state procession. These returning caballeros had no notion of making a triumphal entry; that would be reserved for the victorious young commander when he should come later. But the citizens of Granada were all on the tiptoe of expectation and joy. Any warriors returning from the victorious campaign were heroes to them; and the streets were already so gaily decked, that within an hour they were able to present a resplendent appearance.

There was a long corridor in one wing of the Casa de Aguilar which overlooked the thoroughfare by which any persons approaching that house must come, and to this wing all the household had flocked at the first rumour of the approaching warriors; for it was well known that Don Garcia was certain to accompany home his friend Don Antonio de Aguilar, and the names of both these caballeros had been mentioned by the heated messenger who had galloped in with the news.

"Here they come! here they come!" shouted little Ruy, jumping up and down in uncontrollable excitement. "Hark to the people shouting! Is that for brother Antonio? Hark to the bells! Look how the sun shines upon their armour! I can scarce see for the dazzle. Hurrah, hurrah! Viva, viva! Antonio—brother Antonio! Don Garcia! Huzza, huzza!"

The childish treble was drowned in the roar of many voices. From the surrounding balconies all down the street ladies leaned out, waving handkerchiefs, dropping flowers, flinging coloured ribbons or sweetmeats to the heroes of the campaign. They rode slowly through the crowded streets, their armour glistening in the sun, though the colours of their cloaks were faded and soiled, and some amongst their followers showed a wayworn and war-worn aspect; but there they were, victorious soldiers, come safely through the perils of the brief but decisive campaign, and Granada was giving them a foretaste of that welcome which she would so gladly have bestowed upon Don Juan himself had he appeared at this auspicious moment.

"There is Don Garcia, father; you can see him plainly now," cried Yolante, her eyes fixed full upon the one face that had become all the world to her now. "See, he rides beside Antonio; and there is Eudo behind him. Father, you would scarce have known Eudo again, methinks. Look at that glittering collar round his neck. See how brown, how strong he looks! Sure, a soldier's life has been the making of him. Oh, how astonished he will be to find you here!"

Her lips spoke of her brother, but her eyes were upon her lover's face the while. Her heart was bounding; she could scarce see or hear what passed in the street beneath. The procession paused a few minutes ere the Casa de Aguilar was reached. Somebody—was it Don Garcia himself?—spoke words of courteous thanks to the cheering crowd. Then, amid redoubled acclamations, the little cavalcade headed for the great gateway leading into the entrance court, and Yolante knew that she had her lover and her brother safely back at last.

The procession of horsemen was immediately followed by a quaint-looking wheeled vehicle drawn by a pair of strong horses, and within it was seated a man well known indeed in Granada, and now received by the citizens with cries of welcome.

"Ben Abner! Ben Abner! Welcome to Granada! Welcome, Señor Vivar! Welcome the mediator and pacificator, the friend of the Spaniard and the Moor!"

These acclamations were well deserved; for Ben Abner had been one of the most earnest and successful of the

men employed by Don Juan as plenipotentiaries with the Moriscos, and he had long been known and trusted in Granada, where so large a portion of his life had been spent. He was habited once again in the sombre black velvet dress of a Spanish gentleman, though the long embroidered cloak which enwrapped his figure seemed to give something of Oriental splendour to his person.

Opposite to him sat a tall, stately-looking man, also in black velvet, with a mantle of pure white satin embroidered in gold. His face was familiar to many, and yet people asked of one another who he was. They knew yet did not know him; till suddenly one cried out, "Sure, 'tis Don Miguel de Solis!" And all gazed at him with the greater wonder: for the history of the two brothers, once so well known in Granada—who had been Spaniard first, then Morisco, then leading members of the Brotherhood of Mercy—had become well known throughout the whole region ere this; and it was known, too, that Don Manuel—Brother Emmanuel, as he had latterly been called—had laid down his life at Seron, betwixt fever and wounds gotten in the cause of peace and mercy, and that only one of the brothers could ever return to Granada again.

But at least there was this to be said for the men who had changed sides so often during the weary years of warfare: they had not sought safety by giving adhesion always to the winning cause. Only nominally Spaniard to start with, never having been truly touched by the truth of Christianity, accepting their faith much as they

accepted the dress of the West—as a matter of law and diplomacy—they had quickly flung off the shackles when the trumpet-call came; they had fought for the faith of Islam when it most needed their aid; and it was not till after bitter defeat, when brought to the brink of the grave, when brought under the influence of Esther's ministrations and the chivalrous mercy of Christian knights worthy of the name, that the change came. Then they had adopted the Christian faith when the cause of the Moor seemed in the ascendant, and had been ready and willing to lay down their lives for it—as, indeed, one of them had done.

Don Miguel had now laid aside alike his Morisco garb and the monk-like robes in which he had followed his brother in their mission of mercy. He had resumed the outward aspect of a Spaniard, and indeed he looked far more like one than ever he had done; for the wildness of aspect and the Oriental wealth of gesture which had been conspicuous on the brothers De Solis heretofore had completely disappeared, together with that self-assertion and boastfulness which had characterized them once.

This was now replaced by a gentle content and quiet dignity of bearing, and the eyes of the handsome, war-worn caballero turned continually upon the slim figure of his youthful wife, who was seated beside her father in the carriage.

Zareefa was so changed that her former friends scarce recognized her face beneath the shadow of the graceful mantilla. She was called Doña Constanza now, and had

been wedded to Don Miguel in one of those pauses of the war when men had leisure for the softer amenities of life. They were coming back to Granada now. Ben Abner was one of those to whom free and full permission had been granted to remain permanently in Granada, to take possession in peace of his former home, and to carry on in the city any business which might seem to him good. He was going thither with his daughter and son-in-law to take up the threads of life which the war had so ruthlessly sundered; but first, Zareefa had pleaded, they must go to the Casa de Aguilar and obtain sight and speech of Esther. After that they would find their way home, and see what was left to them of those things they had abandoned when they elected to leave fair Granada.

Esther was in the arms of her husband when her father appeared within the cool patio leading his other daughter by the hand. The whole place seemed to re-echo with the sound of laughter, of tears, of joyful welcomes, of thanksgiving and greetings. The newcomers stood aside for a brief while, watching the scene, and rejoicing in their hearts at the sight of so much happiness, after all the sorrowful and terrible sights their eyes had witnessed since last they had stood within the walls of this house.

Yolante presented Don Garcia to her father, and now the two stood, with hands clasped, looking at each other as men who know that the tie of kinship is about to be formed between them. Eudo had, a few moments before, flung himself at his father's feet to ask and receive his blessing; now he had taken Inez by the hand, and they

were standing together, a little apart, lost to all the world beside.

It was such a moment for all as comes but once in a lifetime—so many loved ones returned safe and sound after many and great perils, after much hardship and suffering, given back as out of the very jaws of death.

Words seemed inadequate to express the feelings that welled up in all hearts; but the clasp of the hand, the look in the eyes, the break or catch in the voice usually so firm and strong, seemed eloquent enough; and the tears and kisses of the wives and sisters and daughters filled up all pauses.

Warmly were Ben Abner and his party welcomed when their presence was observed. Esther and Zareefa met in a fond and close embrace, whilst Don Miguel held the hand of Yolante, and her eyes met his in fearless friendship. Once his passion for her had blazed up like a fierce flame, scorching and destroying, leading him to treachery and violence. Now all that was past and forgotten, or so relegated to the past that neither desired to think of it again.

“I was grieved to hear of the death of your brother,” she said gently. “I know what a messenger of peace and mercy he had become.”

“Ay, verily, lady; and he yielded up his life joyfully in the cause of mercy. He received many wounds whilst seeking to interpose between foe and foe, and at the last the fever came upon him, and he had no power to rally. But he died happy. Methinks he would have chosen such

an end for himself. He charged me not to mourn for him, and I have striven to obey, although from childhood we were comrades, and our lives had ever been linked together."

Lord Montara was by this time pacing up and down one of the terraces with Don Garcia's arm linked within his own. It had been, as Doña Magdalena surmised, a great satisfaction to him to find his daughter's lover so little like a foreigner in aspect and speech. His English was excellent; his fair skin and blue eyes seemed to mark him out as a son of the north; and an affinity at once established itself between the two men.

"My desire, señor, is to take my daughter back to England with as little delay as may be," explained the father. "Already she and my son have been longer absent from home than was intended. Sometimes I have been uneasy with regard to them, not only on account of the unsettled condition of the country in the south, but on other grounds which you may perhaps guess at, knowing the temper of your king and of the Church in this land."

Don Garcia shot a hasty glance at the English nobleman, and he bent his head in assent.

"Señor, you cannot take Dona Yolante away too soon for me, provided only that I may either accompany you or follow you upon some other vessel. I love my country; I serve my king faithfully, and give him honour and obedience; but I know that there are perils in this land to which I would not expose my beloved one. Take

her hence. I have leave of absence from the army. Don Juan himself has released me from his service, dear though that service has been. Let us away to other climes, to another land. It may be that your son and daughter will be safer elsewhere. We need not further think of this or speak of it; silence in some matters is wiser than speech. But I understand. I have said the same thing myself. Take her away, and let me come too. That is all I ask of you, señor—that I may follow.”

“You shall do more than follow; you shall sail with us, señor,” spoke Lord Montara cordially. “There is room and to spare upon the sloop. I have already persuaded Don Rodrigo and his wife to pay us a visit, and they will travel with us; and I doubt not but that Don Antonio and his wife will be of the party. It is well in these days to travel in numbers; and I have a swift and seaworthy little vessel, that carries guns against the Barbary rovers, and will sail against any frigate of the English fleet. You yourself, señor, have the aspect of a rover of the northern seas. You will be a welcome comrade upon our voyage home, though I trow at such a season as this we shall have little to fear from winds and waves. Let us hope we may also escape all peril from pirates or Moors.”

“I think the Moors have enough on hand by land,” spoke Don García, with a smile; “they will scarce trouble us by sea. But I thank you from my heart for your kindness, my lord, and I will joyfully accept your invitation. I desire nothing better than to sail to England’s shores in company with the father of my beloved, and to

feel that I may watch over her and guard her from peril as much as in me lies, both by land and by sea."

* * * * *

They stood upon the deck of the little white vessel, that skimmed like a sea-bird over the water before a light, favouring breeze, and their eyes were turned towards the grand outlines of the receding coast, the great rugged hills, clothed at their base with verdure, and the wonderful colours brought out by the sun upon the grand stretches of rock.

The harbour of Malaga lay dreaming in the blue distance. Soon they would be able to descry to the west the great lion-faced rock of Gibraltar. But the little sloop was not to touch at that port, for the flames of revolt were not quelled around Ronda and Marbella; and, indeed, men began to know already that Aben Aboo was in arms again.

El Habaqui had disappeared. He had gone upon a mission to Aben Aboo, and had never been seen again. Small ruptures had taken place between the Moriscos and the soldiers sent to maintain the peace of the conquered districts. Then suddenly the fires had glowed upon the mountain peaks, the roving bands as yet unsubdued had massed together under Aben Aboo's banner, there had been a sudden spread of rebellion in the west, and even in the east the flame had once more kindled.

It was but the last flash in the pan, and the Spaniards knew it. Probably the Moriscos knew it only too well themselves. But El Habaqui the pacificator had been

slain by Aben Aboo, as was later known for a certainty. His influence was gone; that of the implacable Morisco monarch was for the moment in the ascendant. The projected dispersion of loyal Moriscos into other regions of Spain always acted like oil poured on smouldering flame—it kindled hatred afresh. A new revolt had begun, which flared awhile, and only ended later with the death of Aben Aboo in the mountain fastnesses, slain by his own followers the following year. But it had begun too late to change the plans of any of that party setting forth for England. They heard the rumours of it as they made their final preparations; they scarce knew it had really broken forth ere they stood upon the deck of the little vessel, watching the grand coast-line recede from view.

Yolante was beside her lover. She laid a hand upon his arm.

“You are saying adieu to your country for my sake, Garcia. Is it a sorrowful word to speak?”

“There is no sorrow when you are beside me, maiden of my heart—my beautiful lady!” he answered, taking her hand and raising it to his lips. “I love my country—you would not wish it otherwise—but I love you, my life, better. So I can say my farewells with a joyful heart, for I have my all with me here. Where a man’s heart and treasure are, there is his world!”

She looked up wondering into his ardent eyes.

“But—but—some day—you—we—shall come back?”

“It may be so, or it may not,” he answered gravely. “I have settled all my affairs yonder, and now I am free

as air. It may be that the days will come when we will return to Spain together, my Yolante; yet it may be that we shall make so happy a home in your northern England that we shall feel no desire to visit this land again, though it must always be dear to us in that there we met one another."

"Ah yes! I shall always love Spain. I hope and believe that we shall see it again some day. But, my knight, my chief, it seems so much that you should sacrifice career and country and all for me!"

"Nay, I do but throw away the dross and keep the gold," he answered; "and in truth, Yolante, if it had not been for this beautiful gift which has come to me in your love, I might have left my country notwithstanding. I am one of those who cannot close my eyes to the iniquities which are being practised by the men who call themselves consecrated servants of God, and are profaning our holy Catholic Church by their idolatries, their uncleanness, their intolerance. I have seen. Some day I might be goaded to speech. Even without that I might fall beneath suspicion. You do know, my beloved, why Antonio so gladly carries away his wife, saint-like Christian though she be: it is because she has been known to speak things which ecclesiastics call by the dread name of heresy, and because she has Jewish blood in her veins. No, no, let us not weep to leave behind the beauteous shores and the golden sunshine of Spain. There are better things than beauty in the world whither we are going—freedom, peace, harmony!"

Eudo and Inez, who were walking up and down the deck in all the glory of their early wedded bliss, paused at the sound of these words, and Eudo exclaimed eagerly,—

“Yet think not that you will leave all beauty behind you when you leave these shores. Yolante and I will show you what are the beauties of our English home, of our coast, our moors, our hills and forests and smiling valleys. Oh, you shall see things well-nigh as *beauteous* as any you have left behind in Spain! I am seeking to make Inez understand to what sort of land she is going. Is it not strange that she should have been well-nigh the first person—and certainly the first maiden—with whom we had speech when we landed yonder in Spain?”

“I remember it all so well!” cried Yolante, with eager eyes—“that strange, beautiful journey up through the mountains, leaving the wonderful blue sea behind us; and then the meeting with Inez at the little inn, and sharing a room together; and the talk we heard from Ben Abner and his comrades of what was passing in these lands. How little we thought what was coming! How little we knew what it would all mean to us!—But, Inez, did I not say from the very first that we must be friends, though I little thought that some day we should be sisters!”

They clasped hands, and stood gazing towards the land, now growing dim and distant. Just one bright tear-drop stood in the dark eyes of Inez, though a smile was on her lips.

“Farewell, dear Spain,” she whispered. “Perhaps I may never see you more, but I shall love you always.”

Yolante kissed the tips of her fingers, and waved them shorewards too.

“Farewell, farewell; but I shall hope to see you again, you beautiful land of the south!—Garcia, it will always be a dream of mine that, some bright, beautiful day in the times to come, you and I will ride again through the Elvira gate, and wander through the streets and palaces and gardens of fair Granada!”

THE END.



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